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THE AMERICAN CAREER OF MARIA OUSPENSKAYA (1887-1949): ACTRESS AND TEACHER

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Theatre

by
Pamela Sue Heilman
B.A., Rocky Mountain College, 1980
M.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, 1989
May 1999

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents,
Glenn and Mary Helen Heilman,
in appreciation of their constant love and support.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many persons deserve acknowledgment for their assistance with this study. Many thanks to my committee members, Les Wade, Femi Euba, and Bill Demastes, who have always supported my theatre studies. Thanks also to Dale Moffitt, Ron Willis, and Nellie McCaslin, who assisted with my research.

I am especially indebted to Gresdna Doty and Bill Harbin, who both had a hand in directing this dissertation. Dr. Doty guided me through the early phases of this project, assisting me with research and the early stages of writing. Dr. Harbin kindly agreed to handle the arduous task of editing my document when I started to write again after a long delay. His steady encouragement and insightful comments were deeply appreciated. To both Dr. Harbin and Dr. Doty, I offer my heartfelt gratitude. I feel lucky to have worked with you.

I would also like to thank the many friends and family members who have given their support during this long writing process. They include Maxie, Mary C., Mary B., M. K., Cindy, Lori, Steve, Shawn, Ashley, the Reddochs, and the members of University Presbyterian.

I am most indebted to my parents, Glenn and Mary Helen Heilman. Even when times got tough, they continued to offer their love and encouragement. I feel blessed to have them as my parents. Thank you, Mom and Dad.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the career of Maria Ouspenskaya (1887-1949) in American theatre from 1923-1949, and it assesses her significance in American theatre history. The primary sources for this study were newspapers, the Maria Ouspenskaya Collection in the University Library at UCLA, and the Ouspenskaya clipping file in the Billy Rose Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Prior to moving to the United States, Ouspenskaya acted and taught at the Moscow Art Theatre, where she studied with Konstantin Stanislavsky, who had developed a new form of actor training known as the "System." In America, Ouspenskaya first taught System techniques to students at the American Laboratory Theatre in New York, working with Richard Boleslavsky. She later taught at the Neighborhood Playhouse and her own schools in New York and Hollywood. She also acted in six Broadway plays and twenty movies. Admired as a character actress, she received two Academy Award nominations.

The findings of this study reveal that Ouspenskaya was a highly respected and influential theatre artist during her years in America. Her acting consistently received praise from both critics and colleagues, and her stage and film roles provided a rare opportunity for the general public to view performance by a former student

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of Stanislavsky. More important, Ouspenskaya taught the System to hundreds of students, who, in turn, carried the new technique to the stage, film, radio, and television. Former Lab students Stella Adler, Harold Clurman, and Lee Strasberg brought their new knowledge to Broadway via the Group Theatre in the 1930's. Strasberg later taught his own version of Ouspenskaya's teachings, the controversial "Method," at the Actor's Studio in the 1950's and 1960's, thereby introducing Stanislavsky's System to a new generation of actors.

Ouspenskaya's work as both an actress and a teacher significantly influenced and reformed American acting technique. She deserves recognition in theatre history for her important contributions to performance and actor training in the United States.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1941, Hollywood gossip columnist Jimmie Fidler quipped, "Suggested word hurdle for the climax of any spelling bee: Ouspenskaya."[1] Pronounced "Oos-pen-sky-ya," with the accent on the third syllable in American usage, the word is the surname of Maria Ouspenskaya, a respected actress and acting teacher of Fidler's day.

Almost forgotten now, Maria Ouspenskaya (1887-1949) figured prominently in American theatre and film history for almost three decades, from the 1920's through the 1940's. Through her acting and her teaching, she introduced American actors and audiences to a style of performing derived from Konstantin Stanislavsky's "System," a process of developing a role designed to produce consistent and truthful characterizations.

Despite her influence as a teacher and her popularity as an actress, Ouspenskaya has never been the subject of a full-length biography, and existing historical accounts of her work are brief and incomplete. This study attempts to correct those oversights. It examines her life and career, particularly during her years in America from 1923 to 1949, to determine the full scope of the actress's contributions to American theatre history and her role in the dissemination of Stanislavsky's teachings in the United States.

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About two decades prior to Ouspenskaya's 1923 arrival in the United States, formal acting training in America had entered a new phase, and the changes that occurred ultimately set the stage for acceptance of Stanislavsky's System as a desirable method of study.[2] The most important change was the emergence of private acting schools, colleges, and universities as the primary forums for teaching young actors their craft. During the nineteenth century, American actors had most often received their training through apprenticeships with stock companies that featured a set cast of actors who would present several plays in repertory during a single season, such as Mrs. John Drew's company at the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia or William Warren, Jr.'s Boston Museum company. This practice changed, however, after producers of commercial theatre started to promote longrunning shows that might travel to a limited number of venues with a cast and crew picked to meet the needs of each individual production. Unable to survive the competition, stock companies began to disband. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most had disappeared, and young actors were forced to look elsewhere for training. Since few well-known actors chose to give private lessons, possibly because they lacked a formal method to explain their technique, classroom training became popular.

Private acting schools began to appear in cities throughout the country during the last two decades of

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the nineteenth century and flourished during the first few decades of the twentieth century.[3] They usually employed a faculty of professional theatre artists and were sometimes associated with well-known theatres. The American Academy of Dramatic Arts, founded in 1884, and the National Dramatic Conservatory, begun in 1898, are two of the more successful examples.

Clearly the schools filled a growing need for trained actors as Americans became increasingly interested in theatrical entertainments. Scholar Francis Hodge explains:

> During the mid-fifties [1850's] the minstrel show and such family plays as Uncle Tom's Cabin had proved popular, and large numbers of people gained taste for and habit of theatre-going; and by the eighties, with Puritan restraints of the church largely relaxed, several thousand theatres were in need of a continuous supply of entertainment. Some method of satisfying the demand with actors who had learned at least the rudiments of their trade had to be devised.[4]

By the end of the nineteenth century, vaudeville and burlesque had added to the demand, as did increased production in the legitimate theatre. During the two theatre seasons prior to Ouspenskaya's 1923 arrival in America, three hundred and fifty-three plays were produced on Broadway alone, and the growth of legitimate theatre production continued until the advent of sound movies with The Jazz Singer in 1927.[5] Nevertheless, movies, including silents during the first two and a half decades of the century, provided another new market for actors, as did radio, which became popular in the 1920's.

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Along with private acting schools, American colleges and universities also played an important part in training young actors. As early as the 1890's, institutions of higher education offered courses in elocution and oral interpretation of dramatic literature. "At least twenty-nine colleges and universities offered some instruction in 'acting' between 1899-1900 and 1920-1921," writes scholar Clifford Hamar.[6] He adds that Wittenberg, Idaho, Kansas, Smith, St. Ignatius, and Wesleyan were among the earliest schools to offer such courses. Some schools, like Columbia University, offered general courses in theatre arts that might include acting training as a component. In 1912, George Pierce Baker further legitimized the study of the craft with the establishment of the "47" workshop at Harvard, a laboratory in play production for his playwriting students, who included Eugene O'Neill, Theresa Helburn, and Lee Simonson. When Thomas Wood Stevens opened a department of drama at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1914, which offered the country's first four-year degree program in theatre, acting was well on its way to becoming an accepted professional pursuit within America's academic communities.

But classroom training in acting during the early twentieth century often failed to serve the needs of the new realistic drama of the post-Ibsen era, which demanded ensemble performance and imitation of models from life rather than the use of traditional characterizations passed

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from one generation to the next. Instructors at both private schools and institutions of higher education often taught outdated and ineffectual performing techniques that did little to enhance the psychological nuances found in plays of the day. Although some instructors showed the influence of Samuel Curry (1847-?), an elocution teacher who attempted to merge speech training with the psychology of his day, most promoted techniques that still encouraged individual virtuosity rather than ensemble performance. Course descriptions from many private schools, colleges, and universities show a reliance on the theories of Francois Delsarte (1811-1871), a French voice teacher who devised a scientific and somewhat mechanistic system of stage expression.[7] "Textbooks used [at some colleges] during early years of the century, and sometimes much later, reveal an emphasis upon the conscious control of the outward appearance of emotions," writes theatre historian Christine Edwards. "The methods showed to a great extent the effect of either Steele MacKaye's formulation of Delsarte or Dr. Rush's Voice Culture."[8] In other words, actors were taught to achieve dramatic effects through premeditated poses, gestures, and vocal inflections. In contrast, Stanislavsky's System offered a fresh approach to acting that could be adapted to almost any form of drama to create a less studied performance and the illusion of action happening for the first time. With the System, actors were taught to derive

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their performances from a careful study of character motivations and relationships within a text so that acting choices became organic to the overall action of a play.

By the 1920's, American theatre practitioners were eager to embrace the System, just as they welcomed a new era in the theatre. Playwrights like Eugene O'Neill introduced experiments with dramatic form and content, while artists like Robert Edmond Jones and Arthur Hopkins offered new approaches to scenic design and stage direction. Experimentation was often inspired by the work of theatre artists from overseas, including Russia's famed Moscow Art Theatre, which had been founded by Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko (1858-1943) and Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) in 1898. When the Moscow Art Theatre toured the United States in 1923 and 1924, most Americans had their first chance to view ensemble playing at its best and System-trained actors. Ouspenskaya, who had studied with Stanislavsky, was an actress with the MAT company.

Ouspenskaya's early association with the MAT and later career achievements made her one of the most visible and influential advocates of the System. Beginning with her arrival in the United States in 1923 with the MAT, Ouspenskaya gradually established a national reputation as a skilled character actress, both onstage and in films. By the time of her death in 1949, she had appeared in six Broadway plays and twenty movies, and she had received

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two Academy Award nominations. She had appeared with some of the top actors of the day, including Walter Huston, Charles Boyer, Jane Wyman, Edward G. Robinson, Bela Lugosi, and Maureen O'Hara, and she had worked with some of the greatest directors of the stage and screen, including Arthur Hopkins, William Wyler, Mervyn LeRoy, Delmer Daves, and Dorothy Arzner. She had also gained reknown as a teacher of acting.

Ouspenskaya's teaching accomplishments deserve special recognition in any history of American theatre. At the American Laboratory Theatre, where she taught with Richard Boleslavsky (1889-1937) in the 1920's, she influenced the careers of hundreds of students, including Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Harold Clurman, who carried the System to Broadway via the Group Theatre in the 1930's, one of the most prominent theatre organizations of its day. During the 1920's, Ouspenskaya also taught at the Neighborhood Playhouse, and in the 1930's and 1940's she ran her own schools in New York and Hollywood, where she continued to attract some of America's top talent, including actors John Garfield, Franchot Tone, Anne Baxter, and Joan Crawford, future screenwriter Elaine May, and educator Nellie McCaslin. Ouspenskaya's students eventually carried their new knowledge to stages and schools across the United States, as well as to the movies, radio, and television. The most influential may have been Strasberg who taught his own interpretation of

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Stanislavsky's System, which came to be known as "the Method," to a new generation of young actors at the Actor's Studio during the 1950's and the 1960's. Those actors, in turn, influenced professional acting throughout the country up to the present day. In a footnote to his chapter in John Gassner's book Producing the Play, Strasberg gives credit to Ouspenskaya and Boleslavsky for teaching him all he knew about Stanislavsky's methods.[9] In great part due to Ouspenskaya's efforts as a teacher, Stanislavsky's System became the most widely used method of acting in America.

Since no extensive study of Ouspenskaya exists, an important focus of this study is the accumulation and synthesis of both biographical and critical information. Articles in American newspapers, as well as reviews and interviews, provide significant information about Ouspenskaya's activities after her departure from the Moscow Art Theatre. The newspaper archives at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. are an excellent source for newspapers that are unavailable at libraries like the Troy H. Middleton Library at Louisiana State University, where much of this study's initial research took place.

Two special collections also contain a wealth of information about Ouspenskaya: the Billy Rose Theatre Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts in Lincoln Center and the Maria Ouspenskaya

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Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, University of California, Los Angeles. The former contains an Ouspenskaya clipping file with a limited number of newspaper clippings and publicity materials, most of which are dated from Ouspenskaya's time in New York. The latter offers an extensive collection of background items culled from the entire course of the actress's career, including scripts, photographs, short biographical sketches, business correspondence, school brochures, and periodical clippings.

Videotaped recordings of Ouspenskaya's films provide visual evidence of the actress's performing skills, while two works about Richard Boleslavsky and the American Laboratory Theatre give clues to her early teaching techniques: Richard Boleslavsky: His Life and Work in the Theatre, a biography by J. W. Roberts, and "The American Laboratory Theatre, 1923-1939," a dissertation by Ronald A. Willis.[10] Books about Stanislavsky and his teaching supply additional background information related to Ouspenskaya's teaching philosophy and training.[11]

The example of several biographers, including Leon Edel and Carolyn Heilbrun, guides the organization and analysis of the information in this study.[12] Nevertheless, the breadth of the topic, as well as the large amount of previously unexamined material, necessitates a relatively traditional chronological structure. Chapter one provides both a historical context and a direction

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for the study. Chapter two discusses Ouspenskaya's early life and training in Russia, as well as her work with the Moscow Art Theatre, while chapter three gives general background information about Stanislavsky's System and pedagogical practices at the MAT. Chapter four deals with the American tours of the MAT, Ouspenskaya's first exposure to her future home, and her reasons for staying in the United States. Chapter five investigates Ouspenskaya's work with the American Laboratory Theatre and other New York venues. Chapter six discusses Ouspenskaya's New York school, as well as her Broadway roles and her initial film appearances. Chapter seven examines the actress's accomplishments during her final years in Hollywood, including her film roles and her teaching. Finally, chapter eight provides a summary of Ouspenskaya's contributions to both acting and teaching and positions her accordingly within the history of American theatre.

NOTES--CHAPTER 1

[1] Chicago Times 14 July 1941.

[2] Christine Edwards, The Stanislavsky Heritage (New York: New York University, 1965) 164.

[3] Karl R. Wallace, ed., The History of Speech Education in America (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954). This contains several essays on the history of teaching theatre during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[4] Wallace 553.

[5] Burns Mantle, ed., The Best Plays of 1920-1921 (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1921) 1; Burns Mantle,

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ed., The Best Plays of 1921-1922 (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1922) 1; Samuel Leiter, ed., The Encyclopedia of the New York Stage, 1920-1930 (Westport, Connecticut and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1985) xxi.

[6] Wallace 586.

[7] Wallace 564, 592, and 638.

[8] Edwards 164.

[9] John Gassner, Producing the Play (New York: The Dryden Press, 1941) 62.

[10] J. W. Roberts, Richard Boleslavsky: His Life and Work in the Theatre (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981); Ronald A. Willis, "The American Laboratory Theatre, 1923-1930," diss., The University of Iowa, 1968.

[11] Relevant primary texts include the following: Konstantin Stanislavsky, My Life in Art, trans. J. J. Robbins (London: Eyre Methuen, 1924); Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, My Life in the Russian Theatre, trans. John Cournos (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936); Jean Benedetti, ed. and trans., The Moscow Art Theatre Letters (London: Methuen Drama, 1991); and Konstantin Stanislavsky, An Actor Prepares, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Routledge, 1936). Numerous tertiary texts are also widely available.

[12] Leon Edel, Writing Lives (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1959); Carolyn G. Heilbrun, Writing a Woman's Life (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988).

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CHAPTER 2. THE RUSSIAN BEGINNINGS

> The woman who writes herself a life beyond convention, or the woman whose biographer perceives her as living beyond conventional expectations has usually early recognized in herself a special gift without name or definition.1

Maria Ouspenskaya was born in Tula, Russia, most probably on 29 July 1887.[2] She was one of at least four children born to her father, a lawyer, and her mother, a homemaker. Given her family background, she seemed destined to lead a normal middle-class life, one that permitted most females of the era to reach for few goals beyond matrimony and motherhood.

However, Maria Ouspenskaya never married nor had children. Instead, she actively pursued a career as an actress and a teacher of acting. She devoted her life to her art and eventually received international acclaim for her work, particularly after her move to America in 1923. Along with Richard Boleslavsky (1889-1937) at the American Laboratory Theatre School and at her own schools in both New York and Hollywood, she inspired a generation of American actors to pursue a style of acting based on Konstantin Stanislavsky's "System," the basis for American "method" acting. She also touched the hearts of the American public with her affecting characterizations on the New York stage and in Hollywood films. In brief,

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Maria Ouspenskaya "wrote" for herself a life "beyond convention."

Almost fifty years after her death in 1949, one must ask, "Why?" What were the circumstances of Ouspenskaya's past or the features of her personality that led her to seek a life so totally at odds with the conventional expectations for a woman of her background? Why did she choose a life in the theatre? What inspired her lifetime dedication to her work? In particular, what led her to undertake so daring an action as a move across the world to America? An examination of Maria Ouspenskaya's beginnings in Russia reveals a few clues.[3]

From the earliest days of her childhood, Maria demonstrated an extreme emotional sensitivity and a flair for performance that suggested her potential as an artist rather than that of a homemaker. Her mother once described her as a "child of life and motion," who would, when she was about four years old, run outside to dance and sing to the music of a Bulgarian organ grinder and his monkey.[4] Her childhood also had its darker moments that revealed another side of her nature:

> Yet sometimes I felt a great sadness within me. I felt a great aloneness, even though I had my parents and two uncles and two brothers and plenty of sisters. When this loneliness swept over me I would hide in the bedroom and sing to myself a very lonely Russian song about an orphan. My mother would hear me and bring me out, full of tears.5

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Ouspenskaya's private fears were partly realized when she reached the age of twelve. Her father died, leaving the family in a state of financial turmoil, and Maria's mother was forced to work outside the home to support the children. With her father's death, Ouspenskaya lost a loving parent and her strongest connection to one of her earliest artistic influences, the Church. Ouspenskaya's ancestry on her father's side included a long line of clergymen, and the Church played an important part in young Maria's upbringing. Throughout her life, she would express appreciation for the ritual, the music, and the mysticism of the Church, as well as its spiritual teachings. In fact, she once suggested that even her love of the theatre was a direct inheritence from her clergyman ancestors, since theatre and religion had been connected in antiquity.[6]

Maria was eventually sent away to Yaroslavl, a city north of Moscow, to complete her high school education with the aid of a scholarship and financial assistance from relatives, and she flourished as a student. She had received her earliest education from a governess in Tula before attending a regular school there. When she attended high school in Yaroslavl after her father's death, she received a gold medal for good scholarship upon her graduation.

While still a student in Yaroslavl, Ouspenskaya gave what may have been her first performances, acting in

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several amateur theatricals. A career as an actress in the professional theatre, however, was not her initial career choice. Young Maria Ouspenskaya wanted to become an opera singer.

Blessed with a beautiful singing voice that matured into a coloratura soprano, Ouspenskaya travelled to Warsaw to study opera at the Philharmonic Music School. There she lived with an uncle who was a military man at the Citadel, the Russian fortress in Warsaw. Unhappily, Ouspenskaya's opera studies were short-lived.

Although the reasons for the termination of her studies in Warsaw are unclear, most sources point to a combination of financial problems and her lack of a physically mature voice. Ouspenskaya once talked about her experiences as a singer in an undated manuscript titled "My Reminiscences and Observations," and elsewhere she explained, "It was arranged that I should go to Warsaw to study music, because God gave me a beautiful voice. But I was not mature enough to sing, and the teachers advised that I should wait a few years."[7]

The premature end of her singing career forced Ouspenskaya to pursue other means of supporting herself. Like other unmarried women of her day, she had few choices, and she turned to tutoring. After her studies in Warsaw, Maria moved back to an estate near Tula where she worked as a governess to a little boy.

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After about two years, the solitary life of a governess grew unbearable, and Ouspenskaya recognized her need for creative fulfillment. She admitted that "a great change came over me. I was no longer full of life. I was quiet and subdued."[8]

Noticing Maria's unhappiness, Ouspenskaya's mother encouraged her to go back to school. As added incentive, she offered to to pay the first year's tuition for her daughter's education.

Not for the first time, the elder Ouspenskaya was to play a pivotal role in young Maria's life. Years later, Maria would refer to an earlier instance of her mother's influence. She described how her mother had taken her aside as a young girl to talk about the importance of not relying on physical beauty:

> "You are an Ugly Duckling," she told me. "The happiness that comes to others easily may not be yours. You will not have great beauty so open up avenues of escape. Men will not seek you out. Your salvation lies in developing your intelligence. Fill your life in such a way that even if there are great unfilled vacancies, there will still be great compensations. Make yourself interesting. Be interested in all the things that interest others."9

Ouspenskaya apparently saw truth in her mother's words when she saw all the soldiers flock to her beautiful sister. Perhaps those words influenced her devoted pursuit of a professional career. Perhaps they even partially explain why she never married; it must have been painful to have been reared with the belief that

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one was too ugly to attract a husband, particularly in an era when a woman's ultimate goal was usually marriage. It is ironic that Maria chose to fill the "vacancies" in her life with a career in theatre, a profession that places a high priority on physical beauty. Accepting her mother's offer of financial assistance, Maria moved to Moscow to study acting in 1906.

By the early 1900s, Moscow rivalled St. Petersburg as the theatrical center of Russia. A strong company of actors had based itself in Moscow since the late nineteenth century. And Moscow was home to the government-run Maly (Small) Theatre, as well as several amateur companies. More important, Moscow was also home to the Moscow Art Theatre.

Founded in 1898 by Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko (1858-1943) the Moscow Art Theatre was a private professional theatre dedicated to art rather than profit.[10] At a time when most Russian theatres were still plagued by crude nineteenth-century production practices, such as stock sets, affected stage diction, and minimal rehearsal, the Moscow Art Theatre quickly distinguished itself for its innovations in stage direction, in setting, and in acting, all of which presented a new reality grounded in the psychological truths of the text. Also, Konstantin Stanislavsky had begun to formulate an innovative method of actor training that incorporated close observation of reality and thorough

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understanding of character motivation. His "System," as his theories soon came to be known, would revolutionize actor training in the Western world.

Moscow in the early twentieth century was an auspicious place for a young actress to begin her training. And Maria Ouspenskaya had the immediate good fortune to be accepted at the Adashev Studio, a private school with strong links to the Moscow Art Theatre. Although accounts vary, the faculty probably included MAT members Aleksandr Adashev (1871-1934), Leopold Sulerzhitsky (1872-1916), Vasili Kachalov (1875-1948), and Vasili Luzhski (1869-1931). It also seems to have included the ballet dancer Mikhail Mordkin (1880-1944), an admirer of Stanislavsky and a principal dancer at the Bolshoi who gained international fame during a brief stint as Anna Pavlova's partner, and Alexandroff.[11] It was a prestigious faculty, particularly since Kachalov was the lead actor of the MAT after Stanislavsky, and Sulerzhitsky was Stanislavsky's close friend and assistant. Sulerzhitsky, in fact, had been encouraged by Stanislavsky to teach at the school in order to experiment with the application of Stanislavsky's new theories of actor training.

Maria enrolled at the Adashev Studio in 1906, and she apparently stayed there for three years. She won scholarships for the second and third years, and she sang part-time to earn her living expenses. Of her church jobs, she once wrote:

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> In my day, to sing in the choir on Sundays or holidays one was required to rise at 5 A.M. (we had to have three services in the morning besides an evening service the night before), an hour that might be considered demanding by many young people of today. However, I was grateful.12

Unfortunately, singing in church was not lucrative work. Like many artists before her and since, she lived on the edge of poverty:

> I was paid very poorly but it satisfied my modest appetite . . . [that] consisted of coffee, smoked fish, and half a loaf of French bread, although once a week I went to a restaurant that served choice fresh food.13

Faced with financial problems, she confronted a new dilemma when she won outside work as a member of an opera chorus. Given her earlier aspirations as a singer, it was tempting to accept the employment. However, she declined the position, recognizing that she had fallen in love with the work of the Moscow Art Theatre. She later explained that she did not "underrate opera," but opera no longer held her primary interest.[14]

Having declared her preference for theatre, Ouspenskaya dedicated herself to study at the Adashev Studio in a program that probably included dance, voice work, and scene study. At the end of three years, Maria appeared before an audience for the first time in two roles, the old woman Matriona in Leo Tolstoy's The Power of Darkness and twelve-year-old Lola in The Christmas Tree by Nemirovich-Danchenko. That Ouspenskaya was being

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groomed to become a character actress is evident from the diversity of the two roles. The character of Matriona must have presented a particular acting challenge to Maria, who was only in her twenties at the time. Described in the text as a fifty-year-old woman, Matriona cold-heartedly encourages her son Nikita to smother his unwanted baby.[15] When Nikita expresses remorse for the murder, Matriona replies, "When the day breaks, you know, and one day and another passes, you'll forget even to think of it."[16]

Upon graduation from the Adashev Studio, Maria was told to go to the provinces to find work. "The fashion in Moscow was for the large actress, the imposing person," she later explained.[17] With an adult height of five feet, two inches and a weight that hovered around ninety pounds, Maria didn't conform to contemporary physical standards.[18]

For a character actress, physical shortcomings are not necessarily a deterrent. With her tiny frame and her Tartar features, Maria soon found herself playing a wide variety of character roles in provincial stock companies.[19] During the year following her departure from Adashev's Studio, she played approximately ninety character roles.[20]

Maria played such a large number of roles because provincial stock companies of the day changed their plays every day. Even popular plays ran for no more than four days; therefore, actors were forced to learn many roles in a short amount of time with a minimum of rehearsal.

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While this system afforded Maria with the opportunity to act many roles, she felt dissatisfied. "I played all kinds of characters from old women to boys and girls, comic and tragic, and had success, which did not satisfy me because I could not develop any one part," she later explained. "At the end of a year I wanted to go to the Moscow Art Theatre and did not care for either success or money, but was contented to be an extra."[21]

In August of 1911, Maria Ouspenskaya joined the ranks of the theatre troupe she had long admired after a preliminary audition in Moscow for the MAT company. Such was the popularity of the company that she was one of two hundred and fifty initial applicants. Seventy-five were chosen for a second audition, from which three men and two women were invited to become company members. Maria was one of the chosen five. Of the auditions that year, MAT company member Vera Soloviova later wrote, "I remember well the appearance of a group of students from the Adasheff School where Sulerzhitsky was teaching. In the group were Eugene Vakhtangov, Lida Daykun and Maria Ouspenskaya. . . . All three were accepted."[22]

Ouspenskaya entered the MAT during a time when Konstantin Stanislavsky was eager to apply his emerging theories about actor training to actual production within the MAT, an exercise that came to full fruition with the formation of the First Studio in the spring of 1912. Formed with a select group of actors from the main MAT

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company, including Ouspenskaya, the First Studio presented small-scale productions in a separate venue. Its members were allowed to experiment with Stanislavsky's theories, applying them to their work with a freedom that was impossible in mainstage productions.

Although her acceptance into the MAT was finally realized, Ouspenskaya faced the ire of older company members who resented the enthusiasm of the new recruits toward Stanislavsky's new theories. "We, the people who had been at the Moscow Art Theatre already about two years, felt as if we were veterans and looked with disdain on the newcomers," stated Vera Soloviova. "Besides, these people who came from the school showed much more interest in Stanislavsky's exercises and were more serious and systematic than we who were already Stanislavsky's guinea pigs."[23] In his autobiography My Life in Art, Stanislavsky himself wrote at length about the resentments that grew up between the older and younger members of the company. Those resentments were never resolved, and they eventually led to a split within the company, although it took some time before tensions escalated to a dangerous level. In the meantime, Ouspenskaya established herself as a reputable actress within the company.

Like all newcomers to the MAT, Maria was expected to perform supernumerary roles in regular company productions. Her first role, in fact, was as a member of the gypsy chorus in Leo Tolstoy's The Living Corpse.

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Twenty-five years after Ouspenskaya's appearance in that role, Dr. Nicholas Rumanceff, a president of the MAT board of directors, recalled her debut:

> . . . . a trembling slip of a young woman named Ouspenskaya was so terrified by her entrance into the distinguished troupe of Russia's first and world famous theatre that she could scarcely stand. Nevertheless she managed shrieks so bloodcurdling in the gypsy chorus of The Living Corpse that the company never forgot the sound of her voice.24

No doubt Ouspenskaya also put her voice to good use as a singer while the gypsy chorus sang a series of folk songs in a major scene.

Toward the end of her first year with the MAT, Ouspenskaya finally received two small roles: the housekeeper in Turkenieff's Nachlebnik and the cook in Turgenev's The Lady from the Provinces. After her appearances in those roles, she was accepted as a full member of the MAT, and more substantial roles soon followed.

By the time Ouspenskaya left the MAT in 1924, she had played well over a hundred different roles. Known for her work in plays by Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), she appeared as the governess Charlotta in The Cherry Orchard, the old nurse Anfisa in The Three Sisters, the old nurse Mariana in Uncle Vanya, and the old lady Avdotya Nazarovna in Ivanov. She also played a peasant in Tsar Fyodor Ivanovitch, an epic drama by Count Alexei Tolstoy. Ouspenskaya wrote later that her favorite parts with the

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main MAT company were Anna in Gorky's The Lower Depths, Cold-in-Hand in Maeterlinck's The Blue Bird, Madam Gloomoff in Ostrovsky's Enough of Stupidity, and the leading singer in an adaptation of Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov. Her favorite roles with the First Studio were Tilly in The Cricket on the Hearth, a play based on a novel by Charles Dickens, and Hoclich, a wood sprite, in Balladina, a fantasy by Juljusz Slowacki, a Polish writer. The latter was directed by Richard Boleslavsky (1889-1937), a fellow actor with whom she would have a particularly long professional relationship.

An examination of specific roles reveals Ouspenskaya's versatility as an actress. Though she was in her twenties and her early thirties during the course of her tenure with the MAT, her roles suggest that she had few limitations with regard to playing age or type or dramatic style. For example, she played the character of an old nurse in The Three Sisters. Yet she could as easily play the role of the clumsy nursemaid Tilly Slowboy in The Cricket on the Hearth, a character described in the Dickens novel as a young foundling with a "rare and surprising talent" for getting her young charge into difficulties, a scarecrow of a creature who walked around in a constant state of "astonishment."[25] Likewise she could take a slightly comic turn as the caustic Avdotya in Ivanov, an elderly woman with a fondness for cards and meddling. Or she could play the suffering of the dying Anna in The

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Lower Depths, one of the few characters who matched her own age. In addition, Ouspenskaya displayed her singing talents in The Brothers Karamazov and magic tricks in The Cherry Orchard. As Charlotta, the enigmatic governess born of two travelling performers, Ouspenskaya portrayed a complex character whose eccentric behavior evokes both humor and pity.

Ouspenskaya's work with the MAT continued for more than a decade. However, she could not escape the hardships faced by all the people of Russia as the country plunged into World War I in 1914 and years of internal strife thereafter.

The political situation in Russia had been uneasy since the revolution of 1905 when Bolsheviks unsuccessfully attempted their first overthrow of the czarist regime. In the summer of 1914, Russia entered the First World War after the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo on June 28th of that year. As Serbia was its ally, Tsar Nicholas II mobilized Russian troupes on July 30th. After Russia refused to demobilize, Germany declared war on August 1st. Nationalistic fervor resulted in Russia's entrance into the war. Some MAT actors were drafted, and others volunteered.[26]

Three years later, in a country already depleted by war, the Bolsheviks attempted another overthrow of Czarist rule. They were partly successful with a short revolution in February of 1917. A March massacre of many

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people by police during a general strike and insurrection in St. Petersburg caused the abdication of the Czar. A final revolution in October of 1917, led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924), cemented Bolshevik control of the government. However, continued fighting between red and white factions of the army led to sporadic civil war that lasted until 1921.

Although it closed briefly during the height of the fighting in October of 1917, the MAT continued a substantial program of production, aided by government funding and the support of Lenin. The American critic Oliver Sayler visited the theatre after it reopened in November of 1917. In his book The Russian Theatre, he expressed his admiration of the Russian theatre artists who continued to function under the most difficult of circumstances. He recognized that theatre was more than idle amusement to the Russians. "Out of their sorrows the Russians have builded their art," he explained. "And in the days of their profoundest gloom, they return to it for the consolation nothing else affords."[27] In a 1943 interview Ouspenskaya stated, "I do not remember that it [the revolution] changed the performances. The manager said that we as human beings read newspapers and form opinions, but we were to leave both along with our galoshes when we entered the theatre."[28]

Although the theatre stayed open, the years of fighting were filled with personal turmoil. Several

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members of the company began living in the attic rooms above the MAT's Studio Theatre when it became too dangerous to travel on the streets. During the revolution, the MAT company also ran a hospital in the Studio for the injured on both sides of the conflict. Basic necessities were scarce for many years. For example, the actors of the company, including Ouspenskaya, often subsisted on starvation rations while they rehearsed in an unheated theatre.

Ouspenskaya continued to act, possibly in films as well as the theatre. However, she also worked as a nurse in local hospitals; one source suggests that she was a regular nurse at one of the Moscow University Clinics for more than two years after the start of World War I. In addition, she sang folk songs in benefits and at hospitals for the soldiers. She would later attribute the loss of her coloratura voice to the fact that folk singing required a different use of the voice than coloratura singing. However, other sources suggest that the loss of her coloratura voice might have been a byproduct of the stress of living in wartime Russia. In fact, Ouspenskaya may have suffered some sort of physical breakdown.[29]

As a witness to the two revolutions of 1917 and the civil war that followed, Ouspenskaya encountered many horrors, including the death of many friends and relatives from starvation and fighting. During part of that time,

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she appeared in two plays simultaneously and then returned home at night to nurse a seriously ill sister. One later interviewer speculates on Ouspenskaya's experience:

> The tiny stove in the apartment burned brightly although there was no coal to be had. One by one the volumes of the Ouspenskaya library fed the flames. Heirloom pieces of furniture followed the books; doors between rooms were splintered and used as firewood until finally only the furniture in the invalid's room remained intact.30

Ouspenskaya's own account of her experience is equally grim:

> During one period I never saw my bed for twenty-two days while I nursed friends and family. I saw horses trample civilians to death, trucks piled high with the corpses of innocent children, hoodlums attacking women on the streets.31

Throughout all the horror, theatre was Ouspenskaya's refuge. With the encouragement of Stanislavsky, she even began teaching classes for the MAT and other dramatic schools in Moscow about five years before she left Moscow in 1922. During the last two years, she was the only teacher of young people in the MAT.[32] Stanislavsky himself valued her talents as a teacher and even called her one of the very best in teaching his System.[33]

By the time the fighting stopped in Russia in 1921, Ouspenskaya had gained respect as both an actress and a teacher. She was doing well for a woman in her early thirties. However, dreams of freedom and a better life had long been a part of her consciousness. Later she would recount an incident wherein a fellow actress

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came into the unheated theatre one bitterly cold day during the years of struggle to complain about the cold and the unpleasant state of affairs. When Ouspenskaya simply smiled and replied that she wasn't going to worry anymore, because soon she would be in a better place where she even had her own house and her own car, the other actress slapped her.[34] Ouspenskaya's strong determination to improve her life was viewed as foolish and presumptuous ambition.

Ouspenskaya's life and fortunes changed forever when she travelled to the United States in 1923 with a tour of the MAT. In America, she found the freedom to live and work as she pleased, and through her work as an actress and a teacher in her new country, the artistic talent that Ouspenskaya had discovered as a young girl would be given its fullest expression.

NOTES--CHAPTER 2

[1] Carolyn G. Heilbrun, Writing a Woman's Life (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988) 96.

[2] Much conflicting information has been published with regard to Ouspenskaya's birthdate and her age. This confusion probably results from Ouspenskaya's practice of playing characters much older than her real age. Also, there seems to be no clear public record of her real birthdate.

Even Ouspenskaya's obituaries give varying information. For example, the New York Times obituary published on 4 Dec. 1949 lists Ouspenskaya's age as seventy-three years old at the time of her death in Los Angeles on 3 Dec. 1949. The LA Times obituary, also published on 4 Dec. 1949, gives her birth year as 1887, but cites the Coroner's office as giving her age as sixty-eight years old. The LA Evening Herald and Express obituary of 3 Dec. 1949 also gives her age as sixty-eight years old. Obituaries in Time and Newsweek, both published

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on 12 Dec. 1949, repeat that she was seventy-three years old.

Other more reliable sources give 1887 as the birth year, making Ouspenskaya sixty-two years old at the time of her death. These sources include two items from the Maria Ouspenskaya Collection in the Department of Special Collections in the University Library at UCLA: a typed manuscript titled "Marie Ouspensky" that was apparently written or dictated by Ouspenskaya, and Ouspenskaya's 1942 membership card for the Hollywood Canteen. More important, Ouspenskaya mentions her age at various times during talks with the press during her Hollywood career. For example, she states that she is forty-nine years old in an 18 Jan. 1937 article for Hollywood Daily News. In a 13 Oct. 1943 interview for Baltimore's Evening Sun, she talks about having turned fifty-six in July. Both ages correspond with a July 1887 birthdate.

The actual day of Ouspenskaya's birth is also uncertain. In his unpublished 1968 dissertation "The American Laboratory Theatre, 1923-1930," Ronald Willis gives the date as 16 July 1887. Willis apparently obtained that date from a 1923 autobiographical sketch by Ouspenskaya found in the Lab files. However, three sources give the day as the 29th of July: Homer Dickens, "Maria Ouspenskaya," Screen Facts vol. 1, no. 4 (1963) 46; Who Was Who in the Theatre: 1912-1926 vol. 3 (Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1978) 1858; and Maria Ouspenskaya, ts., "Guest Column for Hedda Hopper," 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. The Hopper column, along with a reference to a birthday party in an article from the Los Angeles Examiner dated 4 August 1939, suggest July 29th is the correct date.

[3] Biographical information on Ouspenskaya's early years in Russia is scarce. This chapter presents a compilation of information from varied sources, some of which may be of uncertain origin.

Clippings and manuscripts from the Maria Ouspenskaya Collection in the Department of Special Collections in the University Library at UCLA were particularly helpful. Much information was garnered from three typed manuscripts: an autobiographical sketch titled "Marie Ouspensky" dating from the time of The Saint (1924); an untitled autobiographical sketch dated 21 Nov. 1943; and an article "by Maria Ouspenskaya" titled "My Reminiscences and Observations" dated from about the time of The Bells of Saint Mary (1945).

Two books also provided much useful information: Ronald A. Willis, "The American Laboratory Theatre, 1923-1930," diss., U of Iowa, 1968; and J. W. Roberts, Richard Boleslavski: His Life and Work in the Theatre (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981). Willis

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gained his information from an autobiographical sketch found in the Lab files. Roberts supplemented that information with material gathered from additional research and interviews.

Several newspaper articles also provided information. Of particular note are two articles that revolved around personal interviews with Ouspenskaya: Jerry Asher, "How Ugly Ducklings Can Find Happiness," Screenland April 1941: 56+; and Sara Wilson, "Noted Actress Reveals Poverty During Early Days in Theatre," Evening Sun (Baltimore) 13 Oct. 1943: 46+. Other articles have been cited when necessary.

[4] Sara Wilson, "Noted Actress Reveals Poverty During Early Days in Theatre," Evening Sun (Baltimore) 13 Oct. 1943: 46.

[5] Wilson 46.

[6] Wilson 46.

[7] Wilson 46.

[8] Wilson 46.

[9] Jerry Asher, "How Ugly Ducklings Can Find Happiness," Screenland April 1941: 57.

[10] For more information about the MAT and the First Studio, see chapter 3.

[11] The identity of Alexandroff is uncertain. He may have been N. G. Alexandroff, an associate of the MAT company.

[12] Maria Ouspenskaya, "My Reminiscences and Observations," ts., Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA, 1.

[13] Ouspenskaya, "Reminiscences" 1.

[14] Ouspenskaya, "Reminiscences" 1.

[15] Leo Tolstoy, The Power of Darkness, Plays by Leo Tolstoy, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1923) 24.

[16] Tolstoy 92.

[17] Wilson 46.

[18] Ouspenskaya's membership card for the Hollywood Canteen, dated 26 Sept. 1942, lists her height as five

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feet, two inches and her weight as eighty-six pounds. Numerous newspaper articles dating from the beginning of her career mention her tiny stature. Photographs and her films serve as verification.

[19] The Tartars were members of various Mongolian and Turkic peoples who ruled parts of Western Asian and Eastern Europe until the eighteenth century. Ouspenskaya's features, particularly her high cheekbones, suggest this ethnic background.

[20] Maria Ouspenskaya, "Marie Ouspensky," ts., Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA, 1. Ouspenskaya does not give specific information about particular roles performed, provincial acting companies with which she was associated, or performance venues.

[21] Ouspenskaya, "Ouspensky" 1.

[22] Christine Edwards, The Stanislavsky Heritage (New York: New York University Press, 1965) 114.

[23] Edwards 114.

[24] "Recalls Debut of Maria Ouspenskaya," unidentified clipping, c. 1936, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[25] Charles Dickens, The Cricket on the Hearth (London: Frederick Warne, 1927) 18. The edition used by the First Studio was unavailable.

[26] J. W. Roberts, Richard Boleslavsky: His Life and Work in the Theatre (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Press, 1981) 53.

[27] Oliver Sayler, The Russian Theatre (New York: Brentano's, 1922) 7.

[28] Wilson 46+.

[29] Ronald A. Willis, "The American Laboratory Theatre, 1923-1930," diss., U of Iowa, 1968, 22.

[30] Wilson 46+.

[31] Asher 80.

[32] Ouspenskaya, "Ouspensky" 3.

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[33] Willis 22.

[34] Asher 82.

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CHAPTER 3. THE HISTORY AND PRACTICES OF THE MAT AND THE FIRST STUDIO

Much has already been written about the Moscow Art Theatre and its innovative creation of a realistic acting style during the early twentieth century. But a brief review of the group's history and practices permits one to understand the philosophy behind the theatrical activities of Maria Ouspenskaya. The MAT played an undeniably important role in the formation of Ouspenskaya's acting and teaching styles. Particular attention will be paid to two aspects of the MAT's activities: the development of Konstantin Stanislavsky's "System" of actor training, especially as it emerged at the First Studio; and the pedagogic pursuits of both Stanislavsky and his colleague Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko.

Maria Ouspenskaya was still a schoolgirl when Konstantin Stanislavsky first met with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko to formulate plans for the MAT in June of 1897. A shared unhappiness with the practices of the contemporary Russian theatre overcame fundamental differences of personality and background between the two artists.[1]

Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) was the son of a wealthy textile merchant, and he had led a childhood of relative comfort. Upon reaching adulthood, he assumed management of the family's factory. However, his true love was theatre.

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Since early childhood, Stanislavsky had attended the theatre, and he and his siblings had indulged a passion for theatre with their own productions of various plays. Known as the Alexei Circle, the siblings gained local fame in Moscow's amateur theatre circles. Konstantin directed and acted until growing domestic responsibilities forced the group to discontinue its activities.

Stanislavsky turned his energies toward the creation of a collective for Moscow's artists and intellectuals that came to be known as the Society of Arts and Letters. He was head of that organization's theatre branch when he first met with Nemirovich-Danchenko.

Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko (1858-1943) had little in common with his colleague. Born into a military family, Nemirovich-Danchenko did not enjoy the private wealth that allowed Stanislavsky to indulge his creative fantasies. Instead Nemirovich-Danchenko earned his living as a professional writer and a critic.

By the time he met Stanislavsky, Nemirovich-Danchenko had written plays that were produced at the government-run Maly Theatre, and he had twice won the prestigious Griboyedov Prize for Play of the Year. He had also spent several years as head of the drama department of the Moscow Conservatoire, where he had developed a rigorous actor training program.

Over the course of an eighteen-hour long meeting in June of 1897 that began at a Moscow restaurant known

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as the Slavyansky Bazaar, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko created a plan for a popular theatre based on principles of art rather than aims of profit or fame.[2] "The founding of our new Moscow Art and Popular Theatre was in the nature of a revolution," Stanislavsky later explained. "We protested against the customary manner of acting, against theatricality, against bathos, against declamation, against overacting, against the bad manner of production, against the habitual [conventional] scenery, against the star system which spoiled the ensemble, against the light and farcical repertoire which was being cultivated on the Russian stage at the time."[3] The ultimate goal was reform of outmoded theatrical traditions with an eye toward the creation of "a real, artistic, scenic truth."[4]

During their initial meeting, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko discussed all aspects of the future theatre. Stanislavsky later wrote, "The Peace conference of Versailles did not consider the world questions before it with such clarity and exactness as we considered the foundation of our future enterprise, the questions of pure art, our artistic ideals, scenic ethics, technique, the plans of organization, the projects of our future repertoire, and our mutual relations."[5] The result was a practical plan of action with specific solutions to specific problems.

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Part of the plan necessarily addressed reform in production practices. For example, both men agreed to do away with use of an orchestra. They also agreed to dim the corridor lights during the peformance of a play and prevent the entrance of latecomers. Such decisions were aimed at eliminating distractions that might prevent the audience from total involvement in the theatrical reality of the play and the theatre's "cultural mission."[6]

Another important production reform was the decision to use sets, costumes, props, and furniture specifically designed for each individual play. In doing so, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko sought to imitate the success of the Meiningen Players, a German troupe known at the time for the visual unity of its productions and its ensemble playing. Also, using historically accurate visual elements in a unified manner would contribute to the creation of theatrical "truth."

In the area of administration, other reforms were also evident. For example, offices of management were to yield to the demands of the stage to prevent a theatre wherein art was submerged under bureaucratic procedure. "The theatre exists for that which happens on the stage, for the creativeness of the actor and author, and not for those who manage them."[7] With that spirit of artistic cooperation in mind, the MAT's founders divided their own managerial duties. Stanislavsky was to have the power of veto in all matters of direction and artistic

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production. And Nemirovich-Danchenko was given the power of veto in all matters of a literary nature.

According to Nemirovich-Danchenko, the most important reform was in the preparation of a production.[8] Instead of using the old method of staging a play wherein the regisseur simply dictated all blocking and sent the play into production with little discussion of individual roles or careful rehearsal, the MAT would substitute an extended rehearsal process. MAT rehearsals were to begin with discussion of the play, after which each individual scene was carefully rehearsed. The director might repeat the rehearsal of specific scenes or even fragments of scenes until all problems were solved. In addition, the rehearsals would utilize complete sets and costumes before the play opened to the public.

Even with a carefully devised plan of organization, it was well over a year before the Moscow Art Theatre raised the curtain on its first play. Count Alexei Tolstoy's Tsar Fyodor, an epic drama set in medieval Russia, opened in October of 1898 at the MAT's new home in Kamergersky Square at the refurbished Hermitage Theatre.

The much heralded production of Tsar Fyodor was a popular success, although its achievement was based more upon its historically accurate depiction of spectacle and its unified visual ensemble than upon any innovative acting style. In fact, Stanislavsky later admitted that the stage director was the "autocrat of the stage" during

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the first series of plays at the MAT. Because many of the company members were young and inexperienced actors. the stage director still dictated much of the staging and often used elaborate spectacle to improve the appearance of the acting.[9]

If the first few productions of the MAT were not innovative in acting technique, they were important in that they gave the acting company time to coalesce. Composed of amateurs from Stanislavsky's Society of Art and Literature, pupils from Nemirovich-Danchenko's classes at the Philharmonic School, and a few professional actors sympathetic to the MAT's artistic mission, the original MAT company was a diverse collection of experience and talents. The first true test of the group's collective identity and the beginnings of a new acting style came with the MAT's decision to produce The Seagull, a drama by Anton Chekhov (1860-1904).

The Seagull opened in December of 1898, and unlike an inept production by the Aleksandrinski Theatre in St. Petersburg two years earlier, the MAT presentation was an unqualified success. The young MAT company explored the subtle nuances of Chekhov's play. "As you know, there is no heroism of any kind in the play, no stormy theatrical experiences, no lurid spots to invoke sympathy, such spots as usually serve the actor to display his talents," Nemirovich-Danchenko later elaborated. "Here was nothing but shattered illusions, and tender feelings crushed by

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contact with rude reality."[10] Encouraged to reject stereotypical images and situations, the MAT actors studied the psychology of their individual characters and the interaction of those characters within the world of the play. The result was a restrained and simple realism that was quickly to become the MAT's hallmark.

Much of the success of The Seagull must be attributed to Stanislavsky's innovative direction of the play. With The Seagull, Stanislavsky created "a great spectacle of the ordinary and banal," explains Mel Gordon, a Stanislavsky scholar. "The smallest activity and interaction in the text [was] filled with dozens of scenic details and unspoken communications."[11] By making seemingly unimportant moments of everyday life meaningful, Stanislavsky revealed deep psychological truths between the characters.

Stanislavsky carefully orchestrated all of the realistic effects within The Seagull, from sound effects to gestures and poses of the actors to pauses within the dialogue. Mel Gordon elaborates:

> Pauses in the dialogue--over a hundred are indicated in [Stanislavsky's] promptbook, but not in Chekhov's script--and long, piercing looks graphically demonstrate the sad, monotonous life of the characters. Instead of boring the spectators, these concentrated activities drew them into Chekhov's invisible world of the contemporary. Both the pauses and stares soon became the acting trademarks of the MAT.12

For Stanislavsky, The Seagull served as the catalyst for an outward expression of inner truths compatible with

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his expectations for creating truth in art. "Chekhov gave that inner truth to the art of the stage which served as the foundation for what was later called the Stanislavsky System, which must be approached through Chekhov, or which serves as a bridge to the approach of Chekhov," Stanislavsky later proclaimed. "Playing Chekhov, one is not forced to search for the feeling of truth, which is such a necessary element of the creative mood."[13]

The Seagull's economic and critical success furnished the foundation stone of the MAT's reputation and helped secure the theatre's continued association with Anton Chekhov. In addition to The Seagull, the company produced other plays by Chehov: Uncle Vanya, The Three Sisters, and The Cherry Orchard. It also achieved success with plays by other Russian writers, including Gorky, Gogol, Tolstoy, Ostrovsky, and Turgenev. With productions of works by such varied authors as Shakespeare, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and Goldoni, the MAT crossed stylistic and national barriers. During its first few years of existence, the MAT gained popular and critical acclaim in Russia. It acquired international fame with its first tour to Europe in the early part of 1906.

Unfortunately trouble was brewing behind the scenes of the MAT. At the same time that the company's reputation was flourishing, Stanislavsky was growing increasingly frustrated about his own progress as an actor and the

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company's resistance to his initial experiments with acting technique.

During a vacation in Finland during the summer of 1906, Stanislavsky began a careful reexamination of the actor's process. The result was a draft titled Manual on Dramatic Art, his first serious attempt to structure a grammar of acting, a systemized method of assisting an actor toward "control over his creative method."[14] Stanislavsky's continued attempts to refine his grammar eventually led to a serious rift in his relations with Nemirovich-Danchenko and dissension within the MAT company, but his artistic explorations were not without precedent.

From Stanislavsky's earliest days as an actor, he had tried to discover the means to creating consistently a sense of artistic truthfulness in performance. He quickly realized that it was not enough simply to mimic the mannerisms of the great actors of his time, actors such as Yermolova, Duse, and Salvini. Neither was it enough to depend upon inspiration alone. "What I wanted to learn was how to create a favorable condition for the appearance of inspiration by means of the will, that condition in the presence of which inspiration was most likely to descend into the actor's soul," he once explained. "As I learned afterward, this creative mood is that spiritual and physical mood during which it is easiest for inspiration to be born."[15] In other words,

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Stanislavsky believed that creative control "lay at the level of personal psychology."[16]

In trying to understand the intricacies of Stanislavsky's System, one must be reminded that Stanislavsky was not a man with intellectual pretensions. He was an adequately educated man of Russia's merchant class who had neither the time nor the inclination for intensive philosophical and scientific studies. Therefore, his early theories result from personal observation, scattered readings in popular literature of the day, and a romantic vision of the actor's craft. According to his biographer Jean Benedetti, "The basis of his whole 'System', as he came to call it, was the conviction that in acting as in every thing else nature, not the rational intellect, creates."[17] It was therefore necessary to find an artistic process that was in tune with the human organism at the level of sub- or super-consciousness. That process or grammar could then be used to stimulate the organism to reproduce the intuitive creation Stanislavsky had observed in the great actors of his day.

Stanislavsky was not trying to reproduce the rational and scientific psychology of Freud. In fact, he had not read Freud at the time he was formulating his initial theories. Instead, he seems to have drawn from French psychology of the time, which was closely tied to physiological empiricism. In fact, the term "subconscious," which Stanislavsky used repeatedly in

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his writings, is derived from a traditional French psychiatric model of the organization of the nervous system:

> In the organization of the central nervous system the higher mental processes are presumed to be located in the cerebrum and the emotions are located in the brain stem. The location of the emotional source of behavior is topographically below the "higher" centers, is more basic in evolutionary terms, and consists of a network called the autonomic nervous system. The term "subconscious" as an analogue to the organization of the nervous system, however, does not have precise psychological properties or functions.18

Thus, Stanislavsky uses the term "subconscious" to refer to a physiological relationship between emotions and the body. This is at variance with Freud's use of the term "unconscious," which refers to the idea that the mind has two systems that coexist, "that interact with one another, but whose properties are different."[19]

Stanislavsky also used the term "superconscious" throughout his writings. This is an original term not found in any established systems of psychology. As Stanislavsky uses it, the term seems to refer to "a heightened state of relation to the world in which an ecstasy is reached completely devoid of self-consciousness."[20] It might be the state to which Zen Buddhists aspire or the state that defines the behavior of mystics or drug users.

Stanislavsky's use of such terms as "subconscious" and "superconscious" was to create much confusion during

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later attempts to interpret his System by his pupils and others, particularly as later generations tried to qualify the place of "affective memory" and "emotional memory recall" in actor training. Whatever his intent might have been, the nonscientific origins of Stanislavsky's terminology give insights into the character of Stanislavsky himself and his lifelong interest in the relationship between the body, the mind, and the emotions as a source of creative inspiration.

In contrast, Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko was a pragmatist who was often frustrated by Stanislavsky's sometimes romantic notions. He was a practical man of the theatre.

Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko managed to resolve amicably most differences they might have had with regard to personality or artistic vision during the early years of the MAT. However, Stanislavsky's fanatical interest in creating his System after 1906 strained relations to the breaking point. In March of 1907, Stanislavsky stepped down from administration of the theatre, leaving control to Nemirovich-Danchenko and a committee of five. Stanislavsky agreed to continue to act and direct for the company on a limited basis. He was also allowed to stage one experimental production per year.

Although Stanislavsky's interest in the System led to the final rift between Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-

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Danchenko, other factors also contributed. For example, relations had been somewhat tense since 1904 when Nemirovich-Danchenko sent an ill-timed letter to Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), criticizing Gorky's play Summerfolk. As a result Gorky, who would have been Chekhov's successor as MAT playwright, left the theatre to start his company. Savva Morozov, the MAT's most important patron, followed.

To further complicate matters, Stanislavsky assisted Vsevelod Meyerhold (1874-1940), one of the MAT's most promising young members, in setting up an experimental studio during the spring of 1905. To Nemirovich-Danchenko's ire, Stanislavsky gave the group full financial and artistic support even though Stanislavsky had always maintained that he could not provide private funds to subsidize the Art Theatre itself.

When Stanislavsky began to experiment with rehearsal techniques during the staging of Knut Hamsun's The Drama of Life in 1907, replacing pre-blocking literary analysis with improvisation, Nemirovich-Danchenko raged. Nemirovich-Danchenko's power as the literary arbiteur of the company was threatened once the primacy of the literary text as a vehicle for performance was threatened. To his view, the power structure agreed upon at the Slavyansky Bazaar was under attack.

A brief truce ensued after the exhange of a series of letters between the two men wherein they agreed to try to work together to preserve their mutual love of

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the theatre. However, too much damage had been done.[21] The partnership could not survive.

Stanislavsky's subsequent experiments with the System could not gain Nemirovich-Danchenko's approval. Although he saw certain merits to the System, Nemirovich-Danchenko believed that it placed too much power in the hands of the actor and the actor's personality. To Nemirovich-Danchenko, it was the director's job to inspire the actors, to provide them with the proper motivation and vision for playing. In his autobiography, he discusses the job of the director or the <u>regisseur</u>. He lists the three roles of the director: regisseur-pedagogue, who instructs how to play; regisseur-mirror, who reflects the individual qualities of the actor through observation and manipulation of the actor's will; and regisseur-organizer, who merges all elements of the production into a harmonious whole.[22] For Nemirovich-Danchenko, the basis for the director's craft was the "infection of the actor" by the director's "intuition."[23] He feared that dependence on the actor's psychology might undermine the primacy of the literary text. Thus, it was the director's job to convey his intuitive understanding of the text to an actor in such a way that the actor would think it was his own idea. In discussing the beginning states of the rehearsal process, Nemirovich-Danchenko says that "the first thing is to discover the individual beauties of the work and the border where the individuality of each performer can

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merge with them."[24] Nemirovich-Danchenko emphasized the necessity of copious literary analysis during the early stages of rehearsal rather than the improvisation and physical work that Stanislavsky tried to employ.

Nemirovich-Danchenko's dislike of the System also stemmed from a very practical concern that its use in rehearsal could waste too much time without producing practical results. In fact, Stanislavsky's early experiments produced mixed results. However, Nemirovich-Danchenko recognized the need to placate Stanislavsky to keep the MAT together. During a rehearsal of Tolstoy's The Living Corpse in August of 1911, Nemirovich-Danchenko even declared the System as the MAT's official working method.

By 1909, Stanislavsky had refined his theories to a point where he could lecture on its general characteristics. Two important points of emphasis in his early versions of the System were "the use of emotion memory" and "what came to be known as the Magic If."[25] The Magic If can be defined as follows:

> The actor knows, intellectually, that everything around him is false; it is wood and canvas and papier mâché. But what if it were true, what if the given circumstances laid down by the author were reality, how would he react?26

Stanislavsky's notes show that he already had a specific process for acting in mind. The six stages were as follows:

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> first, the stimulation of the "will," the creation of a commitment to the author's text; second, the personal base, the inner search for psychological material; third, "experience," the private process of invisible inner creation, when the actor comes to terms with a character, an "image" which is not his own and merges his own personality with it; fourth, "physicalizing," the process, still private, by which the actor gives the image bodily existence, fifth, the bringing together of the inner and the outer, the psychological and the physical, as a synthesis, making an impact on the audience.27

Stanislavsky's theories received mixed reactions from the MAT company. He attempted to use them when he was directing, and he gave a series of lectures. He even introduced classes in Dalcroze's eurhythmics and elements of yoga in 1911. But the older generation of actors remained resistant. And he had little contact with the younger generation since he had no official status with the Art Theatre School. The solution to Stanislavsky's dilemma was the creation of a studio where he could experiment with his theories without reserve.

The First Studio, as the enterprise later became known, was composed of selected members of the main MAT company, particularly some of its more promising younger members. Disillusioned with the lack of discipline, heavy drinking, and arrogance of some of the older company members, Stanislavsky looked to the younger generation for the future of the MAT. Evgeni Vakhtangov, Michael Chekhov, Richard Boleslavsky, and Maria Ouspenskaya were among the early members.

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The purpose of the Studio was to help the Art Theatre. "It is concerned with the problems of the actor's creative process (system), the educational formation of the artist, providing him with a set of practices, help through daily exercises and, perhaps, in future, parallel performances," explained Stanislavsky.[28] Experimentation in the areas of directing, management, scenic decor, and lighting was also to be explored.

In some ways the First Studio was a natural outgrowth of a concern for developing more serious methods of actor training that had begun with Nemirovich-Danchenko's pre-MAT tenure at the Philharmonic School. Long before the development of the System, both Nemirovich-Danchenko and Stanislavsky had recognized a need to improve the quality of formal training of young actors in Russia.

Previous to the 1890's, formal actor training in Russia was of uncertain quality. An interested person had the choice between taking private lessons from known actors or auditioning for acceptance in a limited number of theatre schools. Stanislavsky, for example, was admitted to the Moscow Theatre School in September of 1885 after reciting the poem "Napoleon." He quit after three weeks, disappointed in the method of his teachers. "He was asked to copy his masters' interpretations, their manner of playing a role, their tricks. This was not the logical 'scientific' training he wanted but imitation of the worst kind."[29]

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Stanislavsky's experience was typical of the times. Actor training was primitive even though an interest in actor training dated back almost to the beginnings of Russian theatre in the late 1600's.[30]

The first record of theatrical performance in Russia dates to a 1672 performance before Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. Up until that time clowning, buffoonery, and other types of popular entertainment were discouraged by the Russian Orthodox Church. However, the Tsar's wife had been educated in European ways that were more accepting of theatre, and she apparently encouraged theatrical performance at the court.

Nonetheless, actors were looked upon by the Church and much of Russian society as social outcasts until well into the twentieth century. In fact, the status of the professional actor was even lower in Russia than in the rest of Europe. Actors in Stanislavsky's time, including the great Shchepkin, "had been serfs within living memory, the property of nobility, humiliated and beaten when they did not come up to standards," says one source. "To be an actor was to be legally disqualified from any form of public office. The taboo against turning professional was absolute."[31] It is not surprising that "Stanislavsky" is a stage name.

Imperial interest in theatre increased during the early 1700's under the leadership of Peter I (the Great). The Tsar even commanded that the children of nobility

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who attended the Sukarev school should study acting and give regular performances.[32]

Eventually interest in theatre extended to members of the bourgeoisie. Fyodor Volkov (flourished mid-1700's) used friends, servants, and members of his church choir in Yaroslavl to establish the first provincial theatre in 1746. Because his work was brought to the attention of Empress Elizabeth, and he was commissioned to organize two imperial theatres, Volkov became known as the "father of Russian theatre."[33] Volkov's work paved the way for the establishment of Russia's best-known imperial theatres in the early 1800's: the Maly (small) Theatre, the Bolshoi (large) Theatre, and the Alexander.

Parallel to establishment of the imperial theatres was the growth of the serf theatre. Beginning in 1744, nobles organized companies of their serfs to create theatre. Certain groups gained outstanding reputations, and the early nineteenth century was considered the golden age of serf theatre. Michael Shchepkin (1788-1863), who became famous for his simple and natural acting style, was born of serfs. It was not until 1861 that Alexander II freed the serfs.[34]

The first permanent dramatic school was developed in St. Petersburg in 1779. However, an examination of its curriculum from the early nineteenth century reveals that acting was not a part of the course of study; students

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could study everything from opera singing to carpentry, but not acting.

By the late 1800's, an increasing number of amateur theatrical groups had been formed by private citizens of the growing merchant class. These groups flourished after the abolishment of the imperial monopoly in 1882.

The first private theatre for the general public, the Pushkin Theatre, was opened in 1881 by a wealthy woman who took the name Anna Brenko. The company foreshadowed the Moscow Art Theatre in that it emphasized ensemble.[35] Although the theatre was short-lived, Brenko eventually opened the first free school for working class amateurs, and she encouraged the participation of working class actors in later productions.

By the time Nemirovich-Danchenko and Stanislavsky started their individual careers during the late 1800's, Russia was ripe for actor training programs. However, as late as 1897, the question of the necessity for actor training could be the subject of violent debate. In fact, that question sparked debate in March of 1897 at the Conference of Theatre Workers held in Moscow.[36] Led by Polina Strepetova, a famous St. Petersburg actress, many well-known actors "objected to the idea that an actor should be trained or indeed carry out the orders of a producer."[37] "They believed that a born actor should not be interfered with by anyone and should be allowed to rely entirely on his inspiration." "Down with the

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dramatic schools!" Strepetova apparently cried. "Down with training! Back to Mochalov!" Mochalov (1800-1848) was revered as an example of inspirational acting.

Alexander Lensky, a famous actor of the Maly Theatre and the head of its dramatic school, opposed Strepetova. He believed that it was necessary for an actor to train as an artist. "He stressed the need for the producer who was artistically competent and advocated the establisment of 'permanent companies' and the lowering of the price of admission."[38]

Lensky's connection to the Maly theatre and its imperial bureaucracy hampered his efforts to reform theatre practice. Only those who dared to make a complete break from traditional practices could produce reform, as did Nemirovich-Danchenko and Stanislavsky.

Like Nemirovich-Danchenko at the Philharmonic, Stanislavsky also made his own experiments with actor education prior to the MAT, while working with the Society for Art and Literature. Founded in 1888, the Society was an organization designed to bring together artists of all kinds, including musicians, painters, and authors.[39] Aleksandr Fedotov and Fiodor Komissarzhevski were cofounders. A school offering a systematic, rigorous, and logical program of study was to be attached.

When Stanislavsky journeyed to Paris and Berlin in the summer of 1888, Komissarzhevski asked him to observe the rehearsal methods at the Comédie Francaise and the

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teaching methods at the Conservatoire. In response, Stanislavsky spent almost two months attending classes and observing performances.[40] He was impressed by the restrained acting style of the French, the economy of gesture, and their use of pauses. After the Society's school opened on 8 October 1888, Stanislavsky visited Fedotov's acting classes occasionally to share his knowledge of the Conservatoire's practices.

In his autobiography, Nemirovich-Danchenko discusses his own experiences with formal actor training prior to his work at the MAT. When he was asked to teach at the Philharmonic School in the early 1890's, there were two dramatic schools in Moscow: the Imperial and the Philharmonic.[41] Famous actors of the day taught at both. The results were uneven, mainly due to the lack of discipline among the students. According to Nemirovich-Danchenko, "there was among the pupils a terrible lot of riffraff: inquisitive girls who had come here as to an excellent exhibition; idlers who had nowhere else to go." Acting was not viewed as a lifelong profession. "The majority come here to be taught in the speediest manner possible how to act, so that they might be given good roles in a graduation play."[42] When asked why he attended school, one student replied, "I have the means, and it matters little what I choose to do, and here are so many women."[43]

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Nemirovich-Danchenko approached his teaching position with an eye to reforming the system of training. His status as a non-actor may have influenced his choices. At the same time that the pupils received lessons in voice, diction, plastics, dancing, mimicry, and fencing, the student actors also explored such topics as psychological movements, moral questions, merging emotionally with authors and cultures, and self-assurance. In addition, experiments in stage technique were combined with an increasing number of actual stage performances.

Though Nemirovich-Danchenko made his mistakes, including telling future MAT star Ivan Moskvin that he doubted Moskvin's abilities, he came to believe that formal instruction in the arts could be a useful tool. He later wrote:

> It is a very absorbing business, as everyone knows who has tried it, to instruct in the arts. To seize the individuality, to bring the "spark" to life, to help it to develop; to cleanse it of obstructions, to enoble the taste, to wrestle with bad habits, with petty self-love; to request, insist, demand; to be affectionate toward the pupil and to reprove him; ceaselessly to keep his interest in human material alive; to feed him on your best ideas; with joy and solicitude to follow after his slightest growth.44

Considering its founders' concern for education of young actors, it is no surprise that the MAT also developed an actor training school within its first few years of existence. Under the leadership of Iossafat Tikhomirov (1872-1906), who was a member of the MAT and a former

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pupil of Nemirovich-Danchenko at the Philharmonic, the MAT established the Moscow Art Theatre School. However, as early as 1903, Stanislavsky's ideas were not welcomed within the formal structure of the school. Although he had no formal power at the school, Stanislavsky was looked upon as a "crank" whose attempts to give advice were considered "messing things up."[45]

Classes at the Moscow Art Theatre School apparently followed the precedent of what had been offered at the Philharmonic by Nemirovich-Danchenko. According to Vera Soloviova, a member of the MAT who later ran a theatre school in the U.S., admittance was gained after a series of auditions, the final audition before Stanislavsky, Nemirovich-Danchenko, and the entire company of the MAT. Soloviova and Zdanova were chosen from a group of 230 auditionees. They joined ten other students who had been attending classes for the previous two years. Richard Boleslavsky joined the school the following year, and Evgeni Vahktangov joined two years after that. Michael Chekhov and Jilinski joined at the beginning of the First Studio.

Soloviova described the classes, saying, "We had classes in singing, diction, recitation of prose and poetry, fencing, and body movement. The last was of three kinds; classic ballet, Dalcroze, and later on the Duncan technique, taught by a former student of Isadora's." She added, "Classes were held in the mornings before rehearsals

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and sometimes an hour or two after rehearsals."[46] In addition to attending classes, the students were required to attend all MAT rehearsals, wherein they were put into crowd scenes. As time progressed they received small roles. Third-year students were required to take an examination. If they passed, they might be considered for full membership in the MAT company.

Actors of the MAT taught classes and students were assigned to individual actors or "nurses." Stanislavsky had only just begun to formulate his System when Richard Boleslavsky began classes in 1906. Even so, truthfulness to life in an actor's depiction of a character was already the "cardinal standard" for performance.[47]

Students at the MAT school were also given lessons in history, art, and music. They were encouraged to read on their own and to attend cultural events such as the ballet and the opera.

More important, the actors found themselves in a world where the business of acting was part of a larger lifestyle choice. Boleslavsky described his introduction to that world:

> Once within the Theatre our whole lives were changed. We spent our days from morning until midnight without leaving the building. There was nothing bohemian about our existence. Both men and women were taught to dress simply in dark colors, almost monastic, to wear our hair smooth and short; to behave inconspicuously and with courtesy and elegance. We were encouraged to resemble scholars rather than actors. And we worked and studied hard enough to make the resemblance easy.48

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In a sense, the actors were apprentices. They received a subsistence wage while the older actors earned as much as 8,000 rubles per year. And, except in rehearsals, they had little to do with the MAT's leaders. Richard Boleslavsky, like many of his fellow students, regarded both Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko with awe, as "living gods."[49]

Beginning in 1912, some of the MAT students would also receive additional training in a special venue outside of the regular MAT company and school. The First Studio, as this venue eventually came to be known, was created by Stanislavsky so that he might teach and refine his System. "I began to give a full course of study in the shape of which I had at that time formed it," Stanislavsky later explained. "Its aim was to give practical and conscious methods for the awakening of superconscious creativeness."[50]

Too busy to run the First Studio himself, Stanislavsky placed it under the guidance of his friend Leopold Sulerzhitsky (1872-1916). According to Stanislavsky, Sulerzhitsky "taught all sorts of exercises according to my directions for the creation of the creative feeling, for the analysis of the role and for the construction of the willed orchestration of the role on the basis of consistency and the logic of emotion."[51]

Leopold Sulerzhitsky was a fascinating man whose life prior to his association with the MAT was described

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by Stanislavsky as a "poetic fairy tale."[52] At various times, he was a fisherman in the Crimea, a tramp, a student in the School of Painting and Modeling, a writer, a musician, and a seaman.

Sulerzhitsky, who had gone to school with the daughter of Leo Tolstoy, came to follow Tolstoy's pacifist teachings. As a result of his refusal to be a soldier, he was sent to an insane asylum and then to exile in Central Asia. With the help of a general, he escaped and returned to Russia.

His own misfortunes didn't prevent him from helping others, though. As a favor to Tolstoy, Sulerzhitsky brought two groups of Dukhobors, members of a persecuted religious sect, to Canada. He contracted nephritis in Canada, a condition which would plague his health for the rest of his life.

Upon his eventual return to Moscow, Sulerzhitsky became involved with the MAT. His interest in theatre dated back to his childhood (he had tried to stage Hamlet at age twelve), but a more serious involvement with theatre emerged from his friendships with members of the MAT company. He progressed from doing odd jobs backstage to directing the First Studio.

Stanislavsky's first contact with his future colleague occurred when Maxim Gorky brought Sulerzhitsky to witness a MAT production in May of 1900. By 1906, Sulerzhitsky was working aside Stanislavsky during rehearsals of The

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Drama of Life, learning the skills of a director and the essence of Stanislavsky's developing System of acting.

"Sulerzhitsky began to feel my loneliness in art, my pains of research; he became interested in what I was doing and encouraged me with his interest in my work," wrote Stanislavsky. "Together, we tried to preach the new discoveries to the actors, but we did not succeed."[53] The rapport was so strong that Stanislavsky eventully hired Sulerzhitsky as his personal assistant, paying him out of personal funds.

When initial efforts to teach the System within the MAT proved unsuccessful, Stanislavsky sent Sulerzhitsky to the Adashev Studio to experiment with development of the System in a different setting. After several years, Sulerzhitsky's work yielded positive results that prompted a return to the MAT.

In the meantime, Stanislavsky had achieved positive results of his own with a successful 1909 production of A Month in the Country wherein he applied some of his new acting theory. That success led him to undertake an intensive exploration of theatrical and scientific literature in an attempt to discover the key to harnessing the creative impulse. Using students and assistants to procure material, Stanislavsky studied everything from French actors of the previous century to improvisation to Hindu philosophy to yoga.

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About fifteen of the younger members of the MAT were invited to join the First Studio when Stanislavsky and Sulerzhitsky finally came together again in 1912. The new members of this laboratory for the System included Gregori Khmora, Michael Chekhov, Vera Soloviova, Lydia Deykun, Maria (Marutchka) Ouspenskaya, Nadezhda (Hope) Bromley, and Evgeni Vakhtangov.[54]

The group rehearsed and performed in rooms on the top floor of a building that had once housed the Lux Cinema, rooms about a block away from the MAT's theatre. "The theatre was tiny; a small stage on a level with the front row, a low ceiling, almost no wing space and a raked auditorium with room for about fifty people."[55]

In the late summer of 1914, the Studio moved to a three-story structure near the intersection of Tverskaya Street and Skobeliyev Square. The stage and auditorium of its new theatre were slightly enlarged. Lighting was housed on metal meshwork above the stage and, as in the old theatre, there were no footlights. About 150 people could sit in the raked auditorium, which was separated from the stage by a front curtain. The building also included a scene shop, a library for study and research, and a rehearsal hall. During the Revolution, it also housed a hospital.[56]

The workload of Studio members was immense. Students continued their work with the main company of the MAT. They were also required to attend classes at the First

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Studio. They rehearsed Studio productions in whatever free time they had, usually late at night.[57]

In addition to their acting duties, Studio members were also expected to perform all technical duties, from set construction to moving sets. This gave the actors a close bond. More important, it taught them a respect for the technical elements of the theatre and an understanding of its mysteries.

Stanislavsky tried to give other MAT members a chance to participate. He put up the following notice:

> Anyone wishing to give a reading, perform an extract, submit model sets, show the results of their research into stage techniques, or offer some literary material for staging, should kindly inscribe their names in the book specially provided in the hall of the studio. The book is lodged with the porter, Baranov.58

Although actor training was a primary objective of the First Studio, no single standardized curriculum was ever established because Stanislavsky and Sulerzhitsky both feared fixing a regimen while experimentation was incomplete. In fact, students were forbidden from speaking of the System outside the auspices of the MAT.

Sulerzhitsky led most of the sessions, but "students were encouraged to create their own exercises, scenic innovations, and theatrical visions."[59] This led to varied classes. "Frequently the actors only practiced or 'tested' one feature of the System on a given day."[60]

Hundreds of exercises were attempted during the years of the First Studio, all recorded in a book resting on

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a stand by the door of the Studio. Special days were set aside so that students might comment on the exercises or try new ones. Eventually certain areas of special interest emerged: relaxation, concentration, imagination, affective memory, communication, and rhythm. These areas represented important aspects of an actor's work on himself.

In his book The Stanislavsky Technique, A Workbook for Actors, Mel Gordon presents some of the exercises used by the Studio, including isolation exercises and breath control exercises used for relaxation. Stanislavsky believed that a relaxed body was essential to an actor's ease of feeling and movement. Therefore, muscular tension had to be eliminated.

To divert an actor's attention away from the audience and to the stage where it belongs, exercises in concentration were also employed. Beginning with simple observation of physical objects, such exercises eventually led to use of the Creative Circle, wherein the actor imagines an everwidening space of objects and images surrounding his body. Concentration exercises also included exercises that forced an actor to deal with divided attention, exercises that required the actor to perform a task in the midst of constant distraction.

Since it is important for an actor to believe in a play's imaginary circumstances, it is necessary to

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recreate an actor's naivete. Thus, certain exercises freed the actor to play and imagine like a child.

Although the exercises relating to imagination were usually tied to creating naivete and affective memory, they also had a less obvious purpose:

> In developing their imaginations through game-like exercises, the First Studio actors hoped to overcome the MAT reputation for solemn, thickly layered acting, punctuated with long, heavy pauses. The quick, spontaneous "leaps of imagination" in children's mental and physical activities more closely reflected how the First Studio actors wanted to be perceived onstage.61

The MAT's new generation of actors wanted to give repeated performances the appearance of happening for the first time.

Exercises to inspire affective memory were also an important aspect of Studio training. According to Mel Gordon, affective memory "is the practice of producing controlled sensations and emotional reactions in the actor."[62] Later divided into two categories, sense memory and emotional recall, it was a means to develop the psychophysical response Stanislavsky long sought. "Recalling the sensory details of a simple memory, the actor learns to re-experience the sensation onstage. More complicated emotions, like love and fear, are stimulated through vivid memories from the actor's own life."[63]

Affective memory became the source of much confusion in later years when students of the System carried the

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System outside the Studio, particularly as Stanislavsky changed his emphasis in actor training from emotional response to physical action. However, one might say that any later misunderstanding might be somewhat related to misinterpretation in the use of affective memory from its beginning. According to Vera Soloviova, affective memory "is the remembrance or recall of any experience that 'affected' you emotionally."[64] However, she points out that it need not be something that happened to the actor himself. It could even be something that was witnessed or read about. More important, it was only to be used when inspiration failed. She quotes Stanislavsky as saying, "If the part comes to you spontaneously, you don't have to go through affective memory. Just thank Apollo and act!"[65]

Soloviova also disputed the later idea that the actor must use psychoanalysis as a tool to acting. She said:

> Stanislavski used Yoga and psychology but just to get ideas. At that time there was little psychoanalysis and we used psychology but not psychiatry. We were more interested in the feelings of other people than in our own feelings. Using one's own feeling may be very tempting but it limits the imagination. Moreover, digging too deep and too long, as in psychoanalysis, takes a lot of attention from the character, which we should really care about. It also kills spontaneity. Furthermore, Stanislavski did not believe in showing clinical cases onstage.66

Communication with the audience was yet another area for which there were exercises in the First Studio. Some communication exercises trained the actor to transfer

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the play's message to the audience via the transfer of thoughts to one's partner onstage. Others used dialogue, facial expression, movement, and vocal tone. A particularly strong form of communication could be developed through the use of Prana rays:

> Prana is a Sanskrit word referring to the waves of a universal life force. Stanislavsky and Suler believed that invisible rays of Prana could be produced in the hands, fingertips, and eyes of the performer. Coming from the actor's souls, ultimately they could be produced in the hands, fingertips, and eyes of the performers. Coming from the actor's souls, ultimately they could be felt in the audience.[67]

Finally, the Studio experimented with exercises in rhythm. Rhythm could involve either stage movement or the souls of characters. "According to Stanislavsky, Romeo and Juliet, for instance, will never come together because their hearts beat to different rhythms, not because of family disputes."[68]

In addition to the exercises, production played an instrumental role in Studio training. In fact, both Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko believed that actor training was inseparable from production; exercises were meaningless unless they eventually could be applied to the problems of production. Therefore, the First Studio soon began a series of productions.

The first production was Herman Heyerman's The Wreck of Hope, produced in January of 1913 and directed by Richard Boleslavsky. As an aid to the actors, Boleslavsky

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created special exercises that incorporated System techniques. Most notable were exercises that allowed the actors to create the rhythm of the sea. The production was a success.

The next Studio production was Hauptmann's The Festival of Peace, directed by Evgeni Vakhtangov. Vakhtangov's production achieved less success than The Wreck of Hope because Vakhtangov concentrated on emphasizing the darker elements of the play. Viewing the intense emotional performances of the actors in the Studio's intimate environment disturbed the play's audiences. "All agreed that it was an abuse of the System and the trust of a sympathetic audience."[68] Thereafter, performances were designed to celebrate life and the human spirit.

The pinnacle of the Studio's success was its production of The Cricket on the Hearth in 1915, adapted from the Charles Dickens novel of the same name. In the story, a mysterious stranger enters the home of a couple, forever changing the course of their lives, as well as the lives of their friends, a toymaker and his blind daughter. Maria Ouspenskaya originated the role of Tilly Slowboy, the couple's bumbling servant girl. Michael Chekhov, the nephew of Anton Chekhov, originated the role of the toymaker. Along with Boleslavsky and Vakhtangov, Chekhov was also one of the Studio's best directors.

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The success of The Cricket on the Hearth was marred by the death of Sulerzhitsky on 17 December 1916. Ill for some time, Sulerzhitsky died quietly.[69] His body was moved to the Studio where it remained for two days. Students then carried him to the cemetery. "At the funeral Stanislavski wept like a child."[70] Years later, Stanislavsky told his wife that he still thought of his friend everyday.[71]

The death of Sulerzhitsky impacted everyone in the Studio. Sulerzhitsky was a natural teacher who had engendered the respect of his students. According to Vera Soloviova, "Sulerzhitsky brought out the best in our hearts and the audience responded to it with all their hearts. He taught us to love and understand people."[72]

"In a sense, the Studio was heir to two great legacies: the artistic innovations of Stanislavsky and the idealized spirituality of Tolstoy, as interpreted by Sulerzhitsky," wrote Boleslavsky's biographer J. W. Roberts.[73] During his lifetime, Sulerzhitsky often insisted that the art of theatre should reveal the inherent goodness of mankind. "The actor is not only an artist," he would tell his students, "but also a servant of God."[74]

Work at the First Studio continued after Sulerzhitsky's death. Two productions of particular note were Shakespeare's Twelfth Night (1916) and Strindberg's Eric XIV (1921). Slowacki's Balladyna, the last Studio production directed by Richard Boleslavsky, opened in

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February of 1920. Maria Ouspenskaya played a woodsprite in Balladyna. It was one of her favorite roles.

It is unclear when the First Studio finally came to an end. However, change was inevitable as the original members matured and younger members of the MAT formed their own studios to pursue new artistic visions. But Stanislavsky's System flourished. Actors such as Michael Chekhov, Vera Soloviova, Lydia Deykun, Richard Boleslavsky, and Maria Ouspenskaya carried their knowledge of the System to lands beyond Russia.

The System continues to evolve as it is passed down through new generations of teachers and students. The legacy of the MAT and the First Studio is still apparent on the world's stages today.

NOTES--CHAPTER 3

[1] Most general biographical information was derived from the autobiographies of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko. Two biographies of Stanislavsky were also helpful: Jean Benedetti, Stanislavski (London: Methuen Drama, 1988); and David Magarshack, Stanislavsky: A Life (New York: Chanticleer Press, 1951).

[2] Konstantin Stanislavsky, My Life in Art trans. J. J. Robbins (London: Eyre Methuen, 1924) 292.

[3] Stanislavsky 330.

[4] Stanislavsky 330.

[5] Stanislavsky 294.

[6] Stanislavsky 292.

[7] Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, My Life in the Russian Theatre trans. John Cournos (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936) 89.

[8] Nemirovich-Danchenko 94.

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[9] Stanislavsky 331.

[10] Nemirovich-Danchenko 187.

[11] Mel Gordon, The Stanislavsky Technique: Russia (New York: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1987) 20.

[12] Gordon 21.

[13] Stanislavsky 350.

[14] Jean Benedetti, Stanislavski (London: Methuen Drama, 1988) 158.

[15] Stanislavsky 461.

[16] Benedetti, Stanislavski 158.

[17] Benedetti, Stanislavski 159.

[18] John J. Sullivan, "Stanislavski and Freud," Stanislavski and America, ed. Erika Munk (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966) 103.

[19] Sullivan 104.

[20] Sullivan 104.

[21] Jean Benedetti, ed. and trans., The Moscow Art Theatre Letters (London: Methuen Drama, 1991) 263.

[22] Nemirovich-Danchenko 154-155.

[23] Nemirovich-Danchenko 156.

[24] Benedetti, Letters 289.

[25] Benedetti, Stanislavski 190.

[26] Benedetti, Stanislavski 190.

[27] Benedetti, Stanislavski 190.

[28] Benedetti, Stanislavski 198.

[29] Benedetti, Stanislavski 21.

[30] Christine Edwards, The Stanislavsky Heritage (New York: New York University Press, 1965) pp. 5-24. Edwards discusses the origin and development of Russian theatre in this chapter.

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[31] Benedetti, Stanislavski 21.

[32] Edwards 6.

[33] Edwards 7.

[34] Edwards 21.

[35] Edwards 21.

[36] Edwards 24; David Magarshack Stanislavsky: A Life (New York: Chanticleer Press, 1951) 148.

[37] Magarshack 148.

[38] Edwards 24.

[39] Benedetti, Stanislavski 27.

[40] Benedetti, Stanislavski 29.

[41] The exact date is not known, but it is probably about 1892.

[42] Nemirovich-Danchenko 43.

[43] Nemirovich-Danchenko 44.

[44] Nemirovich-Danchenko 45.

[45] Benedetti, Letters 167.

[46] Paul Gray, "The Reality of Doing," Stanislavsky and America, ed. Erika Munk (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966) 211. Gray's article relates an interview with Vera Soloviova, Stella Adler and Sanford Meisner.

[47] J. W. Roberts, Richard Boleslavsky: His Life and Work in the Theatre (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Press, 1981) 17.

[48] Roberts 16.

[49] Roberts 17.

[50] Stanislavsky 531.

[51] Stanislavsky 531.

[52] Stanislavsky 469.

[53] Stanislavsky 525.

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[54] Roberts 27.

[55] Benedetti, Stanislavski 199.

[56] Roberts 33.

[57] Benedetti, Stanislavski 199.

[58] Benedetti, Stanislavski 199.

[59] Gordon 43.

[60] Gordon 57.

[61] Gordon 65.

[62] Gordon 67.

[63] Gordon 67.

[64] Gray 215.

[65] Gray 215.

[66] Gray 219.

[67] Gordon 69.

[68] Gordon 71.

[69] Magarshack 344.

[70] Benedetti, Stanislavski 221.

[71] Magarshack 344.

[72] Roberts 27.

[73] Roberts 27.

[74] Roberts 27.

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CHAPTER 4. COMING TO AMERICA: THE MAT TOURS AND EARLY YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES

> It was in 1923 that I first saw America, early in the morning of a January day. In spite of the fact that I had been ill and feverish during the voyage, I was up on deck to salute the Statue of Liberty. Snowflakes as large as dollars floated down from the sky. New York's famous skyscrapers seemed to be steel needles piercing through a gray chiffon mist. The mist, the snow, the entire picture was as unreal as the fairy tales I read as a child.1

Such was Maria Ouspenskaya's description of her first view of America, a description somewhat romanticized for the ears of a Hollywood reporter. The reality was less picturesque.

In 1923, the ship carrying the MAT company to its first American tour pulled into New York's harbor on a cold and rainy January day. Ouspenskaya had been confined to her cabin for much of the trip because she suffered from a severe toothache. Anxious company members provided suggestions for cures to no avail. In spite of her pain, Ouspenskaya left her bed to catch a glimpse of Lady Liberty, but fellow company members shuttled her back to her stateroom with little delay. Ouspenskaya's next sight of America was a "miniature panorama of trunks and customs officials" through the shawls in which she had been wrapped for the landing. She played the first few performances with a high fever and a fear that her infected tooth would destroy her diction.[2]

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But Ouspenskaya soon regained her health, and bleak days of illness quickly gave way to a flurry of new experiences. During the course of the next sixteen months and the MAT's two American tours, the allure of life in America took its hold on Ouspenskaya. She formed associations with the American Laboratory Theatre and other New York theatre venues, and she took her first steps toward a new life as an American citizen.

Ouspenskaya's journey to a new life actually had begun in Moscow almost a year before her arrival in New York with the MAT's decision in 1922 to tour outside Russia. Although the MAT had survived the political upheaval of the 1917 revolutions and the civil war that followed, it entered the 1920's in a precarious position. Unwilling to let their theatre become a forum for espousing political doctrine, Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko encountered the ire of Soviet authorities. Only the MAT's international reputation and the continuing support of key political figures, including Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, kept the MAT from certain closure.

The company also faced internal troubles, since it had lost many of its members during the years of war, including such key actors as Vassily Kachalov, Olga Knipper (Chekhov's widow), and Richard Boleslavsky. In addition, the company suffered financial difficulties, particularly after the government temporarily withdrew subsidies in

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1921.[3] Thus, a solution to the theatre's problems appeared in the form of a tour that would include cities in Europe and America.

The American leg of the tour was proposed by Morris Gest, a Russian-born American impressario. Acting on a growing European and American interest in all things Russian, Gest persuaded the MAT to give a tour a chance. Such a tour would allow the MAT to reorganize away from the pressures of the Russian government, and it would help the company to earn foreign currency at a time when the Russian ruble was unstable.[4]

In the spring of 1922 Stanislavsky persuaded a group of former MAT actors led by Kachalov to return to the folds of the MAT. Kachalov's group, which included Knipper, had been touring in Europe since the civil war had separated the actors from the main MAT company in 1919. Stanislavsky reassured the actors that life in Russia was becoming stable again. With the company reassembled, Stanislavsky assumed leadership of the tour group. Nemirovich-Danchenko would stay behind in Russia, partly to oversee the MAT's Russian concerns and partly to appease the concerns of governmental authorities who feared that their premiere theatre troupe, if allowed to leave, might not return to Russia.

Planning for the tour proceeded rapidly.[5] From May until the first show opened in Berlin in late September of 1922, Stanislavsky put together a repertoire that

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included Count Alexei Tolstoy's Tsar Fyodor, Anton Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard and The Three Sisters, Maxim Gorky's The Lower Depths, Ivan Turgenev's The Lady from the Provinces, and scenes from Fyodor Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov. In addition, he trained the younger members of the Kachalov troupe to the MAT style, although he did not have time to work in the painstaking manner usually required by the System.

Ouspenskaya's specific activities during the European leg of the MAT tour are unknown, but she probably acted several of the roles that she would perform later during the first American tour. Those roles included Anna in The Lower Depths, Charlotta in The Cherry Orchard, a singer in The Three Sisters, and a peasant in Tsar Fyodor.[6]

Stanislavsky later described the rigors of the tour.[7] He stressed the difficulty of transporting a group of sixty people and their spouses and children, plus eight baggage cars full of props, scenery, costumes, and some three hundred pieces of baggage across Europe, the ocean, and America during the course of a year. In addition, he had to fuse the disparate elements of the troupe.

Stanislavsky rode the train to Berlin, the first stop on the tour. The rest of the company, which included Ouspenskaya, arrived in Stettin by sea on a steamship from Petersburg several days later. Unfortunately, a storm at sea delayed their crossing and weakened the lot. For five days, anxiety in Berlin was high because there

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was no word of the ship. The company finally arrived shaken and sick, but intact.[8]

The European leg of the tour opened with a successful production of Tsar Fyodor at the Lessing Theatre in Berlin on 25 September 1922. After the Berlin run, a delay in departing for the American tour forced the MAT to consider alternative European touring plans for a couple of months. Therefore, the company toured to Prague and Zagreb before a final European appearance in Paris.[9]

Financial necessity forced the troupe to travel third-class from Berlin to Prague and to stay in inexpensive hotels outside of town, but they were received by the artistic community of Prague with great warmth. Stanislavsky describes lively dinners with Prague actors and friends of the theatre, conversations lasting far into the night, and automobile trips into the countryside.[10]

The gruelling trip to Zagreb included a long day and night of train travel aboard hard benches in third-class, as well as a ten-hour delay at a train station. However, the troupe's arrival in Zagreb was encouraging; theatre admirers greeted the actors at 5 a.m. with armfuls of flowers.[11]

By the time Tsar Fyodor opened in Paris on 5 December 1922, the members of the MAT company had coalesced. However, the fusion was not without its difficulties. Leading actors felt the pressure of hastily added

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performances, while junior members complained of being underfed and underpaid. Tensions mounted when the sets for the first Paris performance arrived mere hours before opening. All special effects and lighting cues had to be eliminated, and local extras had to be rehearsed during the first act break. Fortunately, the actors pulled together to give a strong performance for an audience that included such luminaries as Pablo Picasso, Prokoviev, and Igor Stravinsky.[12]

Troubles aside, the European venture was a success. It provided positive advance publicity for the American leg of the tour, and it furthered the MAT's reputation and association with other theatrical luminaries of the day. In Paris, Jaques Copeau, the founder of the Vieux Colombier, and Andre Antoine, the great French champion of realism, gave them a party. Earlier in Berlin, Max Reinhardt, who was known for his spectacular directing style, lent the company use of his workshops for morning rehearsals.

On 24 December, the company performed its farewell performance for the Paris audience, and on Christmas day it packed for America. It left on the 26th via train for Cherbourg. Stanislavsky remembered the mixed feelings of the company:

> Moods were extremely varied. In one compartment young people were singing songs and I had to ask them to quiet down a bit so as not to disturb and upset the French, who, after the war, had become very pensive and serious. Another

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> compartment was full of fathers and husbands who, having just left their wives and children, were in the same emotional state as I was. A third compartment had been turned into an office with typewriters clicking away. . . . Moskvin was in a fourth, and had everyone in stitches with his unexpected remarks. In another Luzhsky was the life of the party. He had an inexhaustible imagination and was portraying improbable scenes from theatrical life, in which the major comic characters were Nemirovich-Danchenko and myself.13

The MAT set sail for America from Cherbourg on 27 December 1922. The troupe travelled cabin class aboard the R.M.S. Majestic, a passenger steamer. In a letter to Nemirovich-Danchenko, Stanislavsky described the liner as very luxurious and tasteless.[14] Each cabin had two berths, a cupboard, a wash-basin, coat hangers, and central heating. Dinner was served in a large room with columns, and the other cabin class passengers were poor people of many nationalities. In spite of the relatively comfortable accommodations, the ocean journey was a disaster from the beginning.

The Majestic was anchored offshore. This necessitated a terrifying trip to board the ship in tiny steamboats on choppy waters in the darkness, rain, and cold wind. When the bedraggled passengers finally reached the ship, they were met with the curious stares of first-class passengers in dinner jackets and low-cut evening gowns. "The sharp contrasts between warm and cold, and storm and cabin made a great impression on me," Stanislavsky later commented. "However, the unfortunate Titanic, which

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sank during a ball where unsuspecting passengers danced and enjoyed themselves, immediately came to mind."[15]

Further terrors came because the Majestic's passage was stormy, and many in the company felt the ill effects. At one point storms so threatened the ship that the captain feared disaster; the company later learned that telegrams had been sent which indicated that the ship was in distress.[16] Nevertheless, the ship pulled safely into harbor late on 3 January 1923. The following morning, the group went through immigration and customs.

One of the few comforts for the MAT members during their first encounter with America came in seeing a few familiar Russian faces at the dock, such as that of Richard Boleslavsky, a close colleague of Ouspenskaya's from the days of the First Studio.

Boleslavsky had left the MAT soon after the Revolution because his Polish heritage made him a target for persecution. He acted and directed in various countries of Europe before travelling to the U.S. with a production of a Russian variety show. After the closure of that show, he and his actress wife, Natasha, decided to remain in America. With the arrival of the MAT, Boleslavsky rejoined the company, playing parts as needed and directing crowd scenes with extras recruited from each city of performance. He also renewed his friendship with Maria Ouspenskaya. The details of their early meetings are

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lost to time, but their reunion began an important chapter in American theatre history.

Over the course of the next few months, Maria Ouspenskaya helped Richard Boleslavsky to create and implement plans for a new theatre venue that would bring Stanislavsky's System to American actor training, a project that eventually became known as the American Laboratory Theatre. At the same time, both Ouspenskaya and Boleslavsky worked to meet their responsibilities with the MAT's American tour.

Whatever the MAT may have encountered in Europe paled in comparison to the grueling schedule the company followed during the American leg of the tour. From the moment its members stepped ashore, the MAT faced a constant flow of activity. That first night, for example, the company attended a production of Baliev's Chauve Souris and a special reception that followed.[17] The next four months were a blur of rehearsals, performances, socializing, and travel. Specifics of Ouspenskaya's activities are largely unknown for those months, but one can assume that she performed roles that included Anna in The Lower Depths, Charlotta in The Cherry Orchard, a singer in The Three Sisters, and a peasant in Tsar Fyodor. She also probably participated in the social activities enjoyed by the rest of the MAT company.

The MAT opened its tour with Tsar Fyodor at Jolson's Fifty-Ninth Street Theatre in New York on 8 January 1923.

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The production started promptly at 8:00 p.m., and despite a minor mishap when the curtain went up too soon on the second scene, revealing scurrying actors and crew members, the show was a success. "The emotions of the audience rose to match the emotions on the stage. At the close there were such cheers and shouts as New York had never heard--even the chilliest of Anglo-Saxons were swept up in it," said the New York American.[18] "Stanislavsky and the actors were presented with laurel wreaths and flowers (all, as they later learnt [sic], at their own expense) and had to take innumerable calls," states Stanislavsky biographer David Margarshack. "The stage was then invaded by a host of excited people, Mrs. Morris Gest, to Stanislavsky's consternation, kissing his hands. Among them was America's veteran theatrical manager, David Belasco, who kept shaking Stanislavsky's hands and bowing low to him."[19]

The excitement over the MAT's first American performance arose from more than appreciation of a good production. In a sense, America had been preparing for the arrival of the MAT for almost two decades. Long before the 1923 tour, the appearance of other prominent Russian artists engendered American interest in the MAT, and initial curiosity about the company dates to 1905 when the Russian-born actress Alla Nazimova (1879-1945) gave her first performances in the United States.[20]

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A former student of Nemirovich-Danchenko at the Philharmonic Dramatic School, Nazimova also worked for one year with the MAT before she left to pursue leads in the provinces. In 1905, she travelled to New York with Paul Orlenev and his St. Petersburg Players. Nazimova caught the interest of the Schubert organization of theatrical producers and was given a five-year contract to act in the United States. Nazimova quickly learned English and then appeared in a series of Ibsen plays. Her popularity in those plays lasted for the next 30 years. She is credited with introducing Russian-inspired psychological realism in acting to America.

In the ensuing years between Nazimova and the 1923 MAT tour, many other Russian personalities visited the U.S. with varying degrees of success. These included the Russian basso Fyodor Chaliapin, the actress Vera Kommisarzhevskaya, the dancers Ana Pavlova, Michael Mordkin, and Vaslav Nijinsky; the impresario Sergei Diaghilev; the actor Jacob Ben-Ami; and the scenic artist Nicolas Roerich.

Furthermore, American interest in the MAT was generated through the publication of MAT-inspired articles in several periodicals.[21] A story about Stanislavsky and the MAT appeared in Cosmopolitan in 1906, and, over the years, other articles about the Russian company appeared in such magazines as The Fortnightly Review, The New Republic, Drama, and Theatre Arts Magazine. Also,

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books by such critics as Huntley Carter, Gordon Craig, and Oliver Sayler described the workings of the MAT.

Just prior to the arrival of the MAT, two events fuelled the flames of interest. Chaliapin triumphantly returned to the Metropolitan Opera in 1921, and Nikita Baliev's Chauve Souris toured several American cities in 1922. Baliev's production was an "artistic and imaginative potpourri which had originated in Moscow during Lent as the private entertainment of the members of the Moscow Art Theatre and their friends."[22] Stanislavsky referred to these entertainments as "cabbage parties."[23] Seven former MAT members were in the cast of the U.S. version, including Tamara Daykarhanova, who would later teach at Ouspenskaya's New York school before starting a school of her own.

As early as the spring of 1922, Morris Gest initiated a publicity campaign specifically designed to promote the MAT tour. He submitted articles to major magazines and newspapers, and he enlisted patrons in society, the arts, and letters to welcome and support the Russian company.[24] He also explained the visitors' idiosyncrasies such as their ban on applause and their refusal to allow interruptions by latecomers. And once each show opened, he provided programs with step-by-step visuals of the action to assist non-Russian speakers.

Such was the success of Gest's efforts that the houses in New York were sold out for the first eight weeks of

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performance. After Tsar Fyodor played for a week, the other productions were gradually introduced into the repertory. The Lower Depths, The Cherry Orchard, and The Three Sisters achieved equal popularity, as did a fifth production that consisted of scenes from Brothers Karamozov and Turgenev's The Lady from the Provinces.

The company played for twelve weeks in New York before moving on to other cities, embraced by the public, critics, and the theatre community. When The Lower Depths was produced during the New York engagement, John Barrymore wrote a letter to Morris Gest declaring that it was "the most amazing experience he had had by a million miles in the theatre."[25]

After the New York run closed on 31 March 1923, the MAT played three weeks at the Great Northern Theatre in Chicago, two weeks at the Lyric in Philadelphia, and two weeks at the the Majestic in Boston. While in Boston Stanislavsky agreed to write his autobiography, a project that he juggled with his other duties over the course of the next year. After the final Boston performance on May 19th, the MAT returned to New York for a farewell appearance, giving its last performance on June 2nd.[26]

Ouspenskaya earned a measure of recognition during the first tour. New York Times critic John Corbin wrote that her performance as Charlotta in The Cherry Orchard was "admirable."[27] Allerton Parker noted in The Independent that the visit of the MAT was the theatrical

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event of the decade and The Cherry Orchard, the best example of ensemble acting. He added that "Messrs. Stanislavsky, Leonidov, Moskvin and especially Vassily Luzhsky as well as Mesdames Olga Knipper-Chekhova and Maria Ouspenskaya, all contribute full length portraits of the characters they enact; yet they act orchestrally together."[28]

In his review of The Lower Depths for the New York Times, critic Stark Young also praised Ouspenskaya's work:

> Ouspensky [Ouspenskaya], when she stepped out of the line of peasants and sang the verse of that song, brought something to the stage that was magnificent and wild, with enough resemblance to make it credible in a realistic method, but with a power and ferocity added that made it not external life but a great and unforgettable idea.29

Another review of The Lower Depths describes Ouspenskaya's performance of Anna to emphasize the antiphonies inherent in Russian performance:

> Poetry broods over the performance, too, for all its stark realism--as when, to the accompaniment of a lusty song from a cluster of boisterous gamblers, the dying Anna's voice is heard, plaintively asking if she will suffer in the other world, and the solicitous pilgrim sits sewing by a little candle talking to her of peace. On one side of the stage callous, jovial indifference; on the other hopelessness and gentle pity. The song blends with the hushed murmurs, and gathering darkness envelops it all.30

Of her portrayal of Anna, Ouspenskaya later stated, "How many times I died as that dying woman. I grew tired of dying."[31]

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On 7 June 1923, the MAT company returned to Europe for a summer hiatus. The group reunited to play a second season in Paris at the end of September and, also, prepared for a second American tour.

Whether or not Ouspenskaya accompanied the MAT back to Europe is unclear. Because she would act in several new roles when the MAT returned to America in the fall, one might suppose that she rehearsed in Europe. However, a 1929 article from the New York Times suggests that she stayed in America during the summer of 1923; it notes that she was given a year's leave by Stanislavsky so that she might join the faculty of Richard Boleslavsky's new Laboratory Theatre. It also mentions her reunion with the MAT: "On the return of the Moscow Art Theatre here [in New York] from Paris, as they [the company] had not gone back to Russia, she again joined the organization."[32]

Whatever the truth may have been, Ouspenskaya clearly faced increased responsibilities by the fall of 1923. She began teaching for the American Laboratory Theatre in the middle of November, and she resumed performing with the MAT after it arrived in New York for its second American tour on 7 November 1923. In addition to the repertoire it had performed for its first American tour, the company brought new productions of Anton Chekhov's Uncle Vanya and Ivanov, Henrik Ibsen's The Enemy of the People, Mikhail Saltikov-Shchedrin's The Death of Pazukhin, Carlo Goldoni's The Mistress of the Inn (La Locandiera),

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Alexander Ostrovsky's Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man, and Knut Hamsun's In the Claws of Life. It also brought a full-length version of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamozov.[33]

As a member of the MAT company during the second American tour, Ouspenskaya added several new roles to those she had played for the previous tour, including Avdotya Nazarovna in Ivanov, First Hanger-on in Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man, Marina in Uncle Vanya, and Lentochka in The Death of Pazukhin.[34]

Along with her colleagues, Ouspenskaya embarked on a schedule of performances and travel much more ambitious than that of the MAT's first American tour. Starting with the New York opening of The Brothers Karamozov on 19 November 1923, the second American tour included twelve weeks in New York, three weeks in Chicago, and about one week in each of the following cities: Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington, Detroit, Brooklyn, Newark, and Cleveland.[35] The company also made brief appearances in Hartford and New Haven.

The company received a warm reception in most cities. However, audiences were smaller than those the group had encountered during the first American tour because Morris Gest, occupied with other ventures, provided minimal advance publicity.

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The company also encountered occasional bouts of political hostility during its second tour. On 28 December 1923, Stanislavsky wrote to Nemirovich-Danchenko:

> Here we are attacked by both Russians and Americans for using our theatre to glorify present-day Russia. In Moscow they are slinging mud at us because we are preserving the tradition of the bourgeois theatre and because plays by Chekhov and other authors of the "intelligensia" are successful with Russian emigres and American capitalists; they think we are rolling in dollars while in fact we are up to our ears in debt.36

Contrary to the implications of Stanislavsky's bitter words, most Americans seemed to embrace the work of the MAT. Christine Edwards, author of The Stanislavsky Heritage, writes that most reviews were favorable. She cites three facets of the group's acting that received the most praise: "their excellent ensemble; the utter naturalness and lifelike quality of their productions; and the fact that they seemed to be 'living their roles' instead of 'performing' them."[37]

Oliver Sayler, a leading American critic who witnessed the work of the MAT, provides two alternative reasons for the MAT's success in America. "First of all, the Russian Theatre has a vitality, an intensity, unparalled in our time," he writes. "The second fundamental [reason], therefore, is the vitality and intensity of American life."[38] This energetic lifestyle, according to Saylor, enabled American audiences to empathize with the Russian passion displayed onstage. He quotes Stanislavsky to support his point: "No people feels so deeply as the

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American people, and in that respect the American soul and the Russian soul are very near to one another."[39]

Sayler recognized the fascination that the Americans and the Russians held for one another. In their free moments, members of the MAT explored the cabarets of Harlem. At the same time, Americans clamored to entertain the Russians. Even the President of the United States hosted a special reception. A highlight of the MAT's second American tour was its visit to the White House on 20 March 1924 when President Coolidge received the company.[40] This visit held diplomatic importance because the newly emerged Soviet Union did not yet enjoy diplomatic relations with the United States, and it held artistic importance because it was the setting for Stanislavsky's first meeting with Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, the woman who would act as Stanislavsky's future collaborator on his acting texts.

Ouspenskaya probably relished her meeting with the President, as well as the other adventures that surrounded the second American tour, but no record of her reactions exists. On the other hand, we know a fair amount about Ouspenskaya's activities with the American Laboratory Theatre because associates of the Lab maintained an active correspondence with one another.

A letter sent to Ouspenskaya from Herbert Stockton, a trustee of the American Laboratory Theatre, indicates that she joined the Lab in the fall of 1923.[41] Another

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letter, written by Herbert Stockton to Lab shareholder F. A. Vanderslip and dated 12 February 1924, represents the first extant description of Ouspenskaya's work with the Lab:

> I hope you can run in to see the Theatre again soon, because you would be particularly interested to see Madam Uspenskaya [sic], who assists Boleslawsky in his class and who often takes the class over entirely, at work. Their class, which is now rehearsing, is between four and six o'clock, I think, every afternoon.42

Ouspenskaya had gained the respect of her students by the spring of 1924, according to a series of letters written to Ouspenskaya by one of those students, Louise Martin.[43] One letter in particular, dated 14 March 1924 and signed by several students, reveals her popularity:

> If the Laboratory Theatre does not soon show results it will not be the fault of our little Mrs. Uspenskaya [sic]. Even if our rhythm had not always been good, we appreciate how much you have done and how hard you have worked. And we wish with all our souls that you will come back to us.44

Ouspenskaya's responsibilities with the MAT prevented an immediate reunion with her students, but preparations were being made for her return. Herbert Stockton wrote a letter to her on March 18th in which he speaks as if her return is a foregone conclusion.[45] He suggests that he and Ouspenskaya should discuss the possibilities of the Lab at greater length. And he praises her work:

> It is hardly necessary for me to say how very highly I prize the work that you have been doing and what splendid collaboration in the Theatre exists with you and Boleslawsky. You have already done much to create the Laboratory

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> Theatre and to make it grow, and we hope to see you with us soon again.46

Ouspenskaya would not return to New York and the Lab until May, but she continued her correspondence with Louise Martin, who assisted Ouspenskaya with learning English. Martin read and corrected special exercises completed by Ouspenskaya, as well as Ouspenskaya's letters:

> You do not really mean that you want me to correct your letters do you? That would be like correcting the baby's prayer; maybe it is not quite grown yet, but I love it as it is. However, I was about to suggest in my last letter that if you felt like describing the beauties of the landscape or the dirt in the city streets, or what you will, I shall be glad to correct that as an exercise.47

Ouspenskaya's determination to learn English had begun in Russia just prior to the MAT's departure for its European and American tours. While still in Moscow, she took formal English lessons, learning the alphabet and simple expressions.[48] Her teacher gave her a copy of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales that she brought with her to America. She also brought a book of special exercises, but her vocabulary upon arriving in the United States consisted of only about forty or fifty words. Until she could take formal lessons again, she recruited the help of friends or students like Louise Martin.

Apart from assisting Ouspenskaya with her English, Martin also provided a vital link with activities at the Lab. For example, in a letter dated 20 April 1924, she talks about work on a production of Dickens' The Cricket

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on the Hearth. She also mentions dissension among the students in the Lab's classes: "A few of the people who persisted in making trouble by gossip and fault-finding had to be dismissed finally."[49] To Martin's relief, conditions improved after the dismissals.

Martin's letters hold a special importance beyond what they reveal about the Lab and Ouspenskaya's struggles with English, for they also give some of the earliest extant descriptions of specific teaching techniques used by Ouspenskaya. For example, one letter written on March 25th refers to the Lab students' use of exercises and "shepherds" (mentors): "Also, some of us who never had a 'shepherd' in the theatre have decided to be shepherds to each other in order to continue your work of exercises."[50] Another letter, dated 20 April 1924, mentions the use of improvisation.[51] In it, Martin requests help with an improvisational scene involving a girl who reads her sister's letter, which contains a proposal of marriage from the man both girls love.

Ouspenskaya seems to have used techniques she learned at the MAT's First Studio, where she did her early training with Stanislavsky's System. At the First Studio, the actors used a variety of exercises to awaken their bodies and minds to the physical and emotional awareness needed for acting. Often more experienced actors were assigned as "shepherds" to mentor less experienced actors, and much of the work was based upon improvisation.

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In addition to providing information about Ouspenskaya's teaching techniques, Martin's letters reveal interesting information of a more personal nature. For example, one undated letter refers to Ouspenskaya's use of a monocle.[52] Ouspenskaya had a weak eye. Her monocle, along with her use of a long cigarette holder, would become a personal trademark when she later became a Hollywood celebrity. More important, as early as March 25th, Martin makes a reference to Ouspenskaya making the United States her home.[53]

Whatever her personal desires may have been, Ouspenskaya had to delay establishing a permanent residence in America until the completion of her professional obligations with the MAT.

On 4 May 1924, the MAT finally returned to New York, and the company gave its last performance in America on May 11th. The company departed for Europe on May 17th, after having presented approximately 561 performances over the course of two years.[54] Ouspenskaya, along with Richard and Natasha Boleslavsky, Akim Tamiroff, Alla Tarassova, and Leo and Barbara Bulgakov, stayed behind in America.

Certainly Ouspenskaya's connections with the American Laboratory Theatre provided a compelling reason to remain in New York. However, other factors also influenced the decision. Later accounts of her reasoning suggest that the Russian conflict between art and politics determined

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her choice. According to one account, she stayed because she learned that the MAT was making too many drastic changes upon its return to Russia, including dropping Chekhov from its repertory as "too bourgeois." Ouspenskaya presumably told a friend, "Since I [would] have to make a new beginning anyway with a company that is carving another career for itself, I may as well start a new life on new soil."[55] Another account, a 1943 interview, expands on that reasoning, suggesting Ouspenskaya could not support the Soviet government's pressure to expunge certain plays from the MAT's repertoire, because she believed that art and politics should be separate.[56]

More personal reasons likely played a part in Ouspenskaya's decision to stay in America. She intimates in later interviews that she wanted a better standard of living than Russia could provide. Probably, too, Ouspenskaya sought refuge from constant reminders of the unspeakable horrors she had witnessed during the Russian Revolution and the years of civil war that followed. One can also assume that life in the United States offered fresh challenges to an actress who was ready for them. Unmarried at the age of 36, Ouspenskaya could explore new career directions and personal goals in America, a prosperous and free environment.

Many years later Ouspenskaya talked about her decision, attributing it to "the reverse gypsy in me." She claimed she had no second thoughts: "I got myself

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settled in America and I've never had the slightest inclination to get away from it."[57]

NOTES--CHAPTER 4

[1] Maria Ouspenskaya, "One Lone Foe of Typing," unidentified clipping, c. 1940, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[2] Unidentified clipping, c. 1934, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[3] Jean Benedetti, Stanislavski (London: Methuen Drama, 1988) 250.

[4] Benedetti 250.

[5] Benedetti 251.

[6] Ouspenskaya's name appears in the cast lists provided with John Corbin's reviews of The Lower Depths, The Cherry Orchard, and The Three Sisters: New York Times 16 Jan. 1923; New York Times 23 Jan. 1923; and New York Times 30 Jan. 1923. Although her name doesn't appear in association with reviews of Tsar Fiodor, a cast photograph in the Maria Ouspenskaya Collection at UCLA shows her dressed as a peasant.

[7] Konstantin Stanislavsky, Konstantin Stanislavsky: Selected Works, compiled by Oksana Korneva (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1984) 238-290.

[8] Stanislavsky, Selected Works 243.

[9] Benedetti 254.

[10] Stanislavsky, Selected Works 247.

[11] Stanislavsky, Selected Works 250.

[12] Benedetti 256.

[13] Stanislavsky, Selected Works 272.

[14] David Magarshack, Stanislavsky: A Life (New York, Chanticleer Press, 1951) 360.

[15] Stanislavsky, Selected Works 275.

[16] Stanislavsky, Selected Works 277.

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[17] Magarshack 363.

[18] Foster Hirsch, A Method to Their Madness (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1984) 54.

[19] Magarshack 364.

[20] Christine Edwards, The Stanislavsky Heritage (New York: New York University Press, 1965) 214-216. Edwards discusses various Russian artists whose visits to America preceded the MAT tours.

[21] Edwards 217-220. Edwards lists numerous American publications that featured writing about the MAT.

[22] Edwards 220.

[23] Edwards 220.

[24] Oliver Sayler, Inside the Moscow Art Theatre (New York: Brentano's, 1925) 21.

[25] Sayler 26.

[26] Magarshack 367; Sayler 24.

[27] John Corbin, New York Times 28 Jan. 1923.

[28] Edwards 230.

[29] Edwards 250.

[30] Sheppard Butler, unidentified clipping, 6 April 1923, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[31] Marguerite Tazelaar, "She Saw Her Stand-In Go By, And Thought She'd Been Fired," unidentified clipping, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[32] "A Moscow Art Theatre Alumna," unidentified clipping, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[33] Sayler 25.

[34] Ouspenskaya's name appears in the cast lists provided with John Corbin's reviews of Ivanoff, Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man, Uncle Vanya, and The Death of Pazukhin: New York Times 27 Nov. 1923; New York Times

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6 Dec. 1923; New York Times 29 Jan. 1924; and New York Times 12 Feb. 1924.

[35] Sayler 25.

[36] Jean Benedetti, ed., The Moscow Art Theatre Letters (London: Methuen Drama, 1991) 320.

[37] Edwards 229.

[38] Sayler 19.

[39] Sayler 19.

[40] Benedetti 265.

[41] Ronald Willis, "The American Laboratory Theatre, 1923-1930," diss., U of Iowa, 1968, 62.

[42] Willis 62.

[43] The letters from Louise Martin are a part of the Maria Ouspenskaya Collection at UCLA.

[44] Louise Martin, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, 14 March 1924, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[45] Willis 62.

[46] Willis 62.

[47] Louise Martin, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, n.d., Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[48] Unidentified ts., 21 Nov. 1943, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. Although this typescript is unsigned, it appears to be an autobiographical sketch by Ouspenskaya.

[49] Louise Martin, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, 20 April 1924, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[50] Louise Martin, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, 25 April 1924, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[51] Louise Martin, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, 20 April 1924, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

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[52] Louise Martin, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, n.d., Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[53] Louise Martin, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, 25 March 1924, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[54] Magarshack 357.

[55] Tazelaar, "She Saw Her Stand-In Go By."

[56] Dudley Early, "Hollywood-By-the-Way," Family Circle, 25 April 1940.

[57] Lucius Beebe, "Stage Asides: Ouspenskaya," unidentified clipping, c. 1943, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

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CHAPTER 5. THE TWENTIES: THE AMERICAN LABORATORY THEATRE AND ACTING IN NEW YORK

> The work of teaching is interesting to me and I have had success in it. For it I use all the knowledge I have obtained in the Moscow Art Theatre and my own intuition.1

Maria Ouspenskaya recorded those words in the fall of 1924 as she started her second year of teaching for the American Laboratory Theatre. A longtime member of the Moscow Art Theatre, she had stayed behind in New York after the Russian performing group completed its American tours in May. Over the course of the next six years, she faced the task of establishing herself as a reputable teacher of acting in America. She also tried to advance her career as a performer by acting on the New York stage.

The extent of Ouspenskaya's early involvement with the American Laboratory Theatre remains not fully known. However, she probably assisted with the early formation of the organization, and she certainly taught acting to its students during the 1923-1924 season.[2] "For the past year I have been doing the same kind of teaching that I did [with the MAT] here in the Laboratory Theatre, as Boleslavsky's assistant," she explained in the fall of 1924.[3]

Ouspenskaya's relationship with Richard Boleslavsky dates back to 1912 when both were founding members of the MAT's First Studio, the organization dedicated to

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experimenting with Konstantin Stanislavsky's System for acting. She had strong feelings about Boleslavsky's work at the Studio: "I do not remember any other director who gave so much of comfort [and] freedom and who knew how to put the actors into the creative state."[4] Not surprisingly, one of Ouspenskaya's favorite roles was that of Hoclich, a wood sprite, in Juljusz Slowacki's Balladina, a Polish fantasy directed by Boleslavsky for the Studio.[5]

Boleslavsky left Russia after the Revolution to escape political persecution, but he and Ouspenskaya renewed their friendship after they met again during the MAT's first tour of America in 1923. They joined forces to create the American Laboratory Theatre, an organization designed to bring acting in America to the same high level of artistic quality as the acting of the MAT. The venture achieved an admirable degree of success, in part because Boleslavsky was an experienced theatre professional whose background and skills complemented those of Ouspenskaya.

Richard Boleslavsky was born on 4 February 1889 in Warsaw, Poland, to a Catholic family with no theatre connections.[6] His interest in acting developed after he was cast in an amateur production when he was fourteen or fifteen years of age. Soon after, he began studies with a famous actor of the day and briefly joined a travelling Russian troupe. He continued to act with an

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amateur theatrical group in Odessa while he finished high school and two years of post-secondary education.

In the fall of 1906, Boleslavsky auditioned for an apprenticeship with the Moscow Art Theatre. Although only seventeen years old, he was one of three students accepted that year.

Boleslavsky fulfilled his young promise with rapid advancement in the MAT. After completing the required course of classes, he became a regular member of the company on 22 August 1908, and his success as Belyayev in the 1909 production of Turgenev's A Month in the Country led to numerous roles in new MAT plays. A founding member of the First Studio in 1912, he was allowed to direct its first show, The Good Hope by Herman Heyermans. Other directing work soon followed, including jobs outside the MAT in the fledgling world of cinema.

Life for Boleslavsky continued largely unchanged in the months after the outbreak of World War I in 1914, but he joined the military in the summer or early fall of 1915. He served for two years, and the highpoint of his military career was the time he spent fighting with the Polish Lancers, a Polish unit of the Russian army.

Just prior to the October Revolution of 1917, Boleslavsky returned to Moscow where he was able to resume his associations with the MAT. His work there included directing Balladina in 1919, but his tenure with the company was short-lived due to his political beliefs.

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Because he maintained an allegience to his Polish homeland and hoped for Poland's freedom from Russian control, he was unable to choose sides in the civil wars that followed the Revolution. The resulting political tensions made staying in Russia a dangerous proposition.

Boleslavsky and his actress wife, Natasha, fled across the border to Poland in 1920. After about two years in Poland, the couple travelled to Berlin, Prague, Copenhagen, and Paris in pursuit of both sustenance and their craft. They eventually made their way to the United States in the fall of 1922 as members of a popular Russian revue.

In January of 1923, Boleslavsky rejoined the MAT when the company arrived in New York for its first American tour. He directed crowd scenes with extras recruited from each new city, and he acted the roles of Prince Shakhovskoy in Tolstoy's Tsar Fyodor and Satin in Gorky's The Lower Depths.

Soon after the arrival of the MAT, Boleslavsky also planted the seeds for the American Laboratory Theatre by lecturing and writing about the working methods of the MAT and Stanislavsky's System of Acting.[7] Beginning on 18 January 1923, he spoke at the Princess Theatre twice a week for six to eight weeks. He also contributed articles to several publications, and he later made appearances at the Neighborhood Playhouse, one of the popular nonprofessional groups of the day.

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Founded in 1915 as an artistic outlet for residents of New York's lower East Side, the Neighborhood Playhouse soon became well-known for its attempts to integrate the numerous crafts of the theatre within production at a time when the commercial stage tended to emphasize single elements, such as spectacle or stars.[8] The organization's leaders often looked to Russia for guidance, and they particularly appreciated the teachings of Stanislavsky, which they would continue to promote after the establishment of the Neighborhood Playhouse School of Theatre in 1928. With his appearances in 1923, Boleslavsky provided the Neighborhood Playhouse with some of its earliest contact with Stanislavsky's System.

Boleslavsky's enthusiastic lectures about the System and other MAT methods, along with his writings and his direction of two short plays for the Neighborhood Playhouse, quickly captured the interest of American theatre professionals and patrons of the arts. Among the latter were Miriam Kimball Stockton and her husband Herbert Stockton, a lawyer. The Stocktons asked Boleslavsky to create an organization that would incorporate the methods of the MAT, and the American Laboratory Theatre began with the establishment of a trust in the summer of 1923.[9] During its seven years of operation, from 1923 until 1930, almost five hundred students attended. Because it was the first organization in the United States to bring Stanislavsky's teachings

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to a large number of students, the American Laboratory Theatre soon earned a distinguished and influential place in American theatre history. With its attempts to provide the American public with a motivation-based approach to acting training and an ensemble-oriented performance company modelled after the MAT, the Lab also filled a void in the theatrical world of its era.

"The Twenties, you remember, was a period of parties," writes Harold Clurman in The Fervent Years, his account of the Group Theatre. Clurman, who studied at the Lab, adds, "It was the time of the good time."[10] Americans celebrated their freedom and prosperity following the horrors of World War I in speakeasies, night clubs, and private homes. Clurman notes, "The characteristic feature of the period--what gave it its glow and excitement--was its energy."[11]

Infused with the energy of the age, American theatre flourished. A new generation of playwrights examined America's unique cultural identity in the wake of the war.[12] The production of Eugene O'Neill's Beyond the Horizon on Broadway in February of 1920 signified their first major success. Works by Elmer Rice, George Kaufman, Sidney Howard, Maxwell Anderson, George Kelly, and others soon followed. Some of these new playwrights, including O'Neill, revitalized American drama by experimenting with dramatic forms and styles, as well as a new stagecraft that refelected European anti-realism, especially

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expressionism. Others, like Kaufman and Howard, offered insightful and sometimes scathing explorations of post-war social mores through more traditional dramatic forms.

Nevertheless, Broadway, American theatre's national capital, was often characterized by garish displays of theatricality, such as the Ziegfeld Follies, George White's Scandals, and Irving Berlin's Music Box Revues, all of which featured elaborate sets, lighting, and costumes. Most of all, Broadway showcased stars, including Katharine Cornell, the Barrymores, Marilyn Miller, Jane Cowl, Laurette Taylor, Pauline Lord, Helen Hayes, the Lunts, Ina Claire, and Jeanne Eagels.[13] Although these actors gave acclaimed performances in many types of plays, ranging from revivals of Shakespeare and the Greeks to modern comedies and dramas to the experimental works of new playwrights, they were still pawns in the star system that producers like Charles Frohman (1854-1915) and David Belasco (c. 1854-1931) had popularized earlier in the century, wherein personalities were promoted over plays to attract audiences. As commercial producers struggled to feed popular tastes, they often ignored, or were ignorant of, artistic concerns, such as the creation of acting ensembles or the development of truthful characterizations.

Artistic experimentation most often occurred outside the realm of Broadway, particularly in the venues of several amateur theatre groups associated with the "little

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theatre" movement.[14] These theatre groups, which included Boston's Toy Theatre, the Chicago Little Theatre, and New York's Neighborhood Playhouse, Washington Square Players, and Provincetown Players, began to form about 1912 and produced dramas that were not marketable on the commercial stage. Concurrently, an innovative concept of staging and scenic design influenced by European avant-garde practitioners, termed the "New Stagecraft," emerged from American designers like Robert Edmond Jones.

As theatre production expanded beyond Broadway, scholars increased their efforts to promote theatre practice as a legitimate area of study, particularly in college and university curriculums.[15] Prior to the "little theatre" movement and its energetic demonstrations of the intellectual and artistic possibilities of theatre, formal training in theatre arts at most institutions of higher education was still sporadic. The "little theatre" movement spurred interest in the study of playwriting, technical production skills, and acting. At the same time, educators, such as Brander Mathews at Columbia, George Pierce Baker at Harvard (and later Yale), and Thomas Wood Stevens at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, provided more opportunities for formal study of theatre arts. This convergence of forces set the stage for academic interest in Stanislavsky's System. However, the country still lacked the forum for experimentation that Russia possessed in the Moscow Art Theatre:

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> But what the American theatre didn't have, and could barely even envision, was a true repertory company, a band of players who had the benefits of similar training, years of practical experience in working together, a body of distinguished plays to draw from, and agreed-upon aims and ideals.16

With the American Laboratory Theatre, Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya hoped to provide both an actor training program and the foundation for the repertory company America needed. A paragraph from a program for the 1927-1928 season confirms this: "The American Laboratory Theatre was founded for the purpose of giving young Americans a place in which to develop the arts of the theatre under the most creative conditions--and thus to achieve, by process of normal growth, the establishment of a permanent and representative American repertory theatre."[17]

Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya created an acting company by the end of the Lab's first season, but their greatest legacy was the training they provided to the Lab's actors. From the beginning, the Lab's founders viewed education of the actor as their primary task. Boleslavsky once explained his own feelings: "My sorrow in the theater is that the young actor of talent has so little opportunity to develop and train his talent, to learn to know the mysterious, romantic, poetic dreamland which is the actor's soul."[18]

Boleslavsky's lament led to action, and the Lab became the first organization in America to offer comprehensive

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actor training.[19] From its beginning, the Lab stood apart from other acting schools of the day that offered only practice in technique. Foster Hirsch noted that "the Lab promised more than technical instruction; it aimed to be a theatrical holy ground, a place where the spirit dwells and is given flight."[20] Stella Adler, who studied at the Lab, described the atmosphere:

> At Richard Boleslavski's American Lab Theatre, you were flooded with clarity and health and values. Boleslavski was a brilliant speaker who carried on the tradition of Stanislavski and Chaliapin. They were all giants on the stage, powerful forces in the theatre. Like Russian music, they were strong and big--you got this Moussorgsky quality from the men--it wasn't an English quality, I can tell you that![21]

The Lab offered a program designed to educate and discipline the actor's body, voice, intellect, and "spirit."[22] The actual course of study at the Lab consisted of a three-year program of classes that fell into three categories: Development of the Outer Means of Expression, Arts and Theory Pertaining to Theatre, and Development of the Inner Means of Expression.[23]

Development of the Outer Means of Expression involved working for 1½ hours per day for two years on physical aspects of actor training such as movement, voice, and makeup. Specific movement classes included ballet and fencing, as well as Dalcroze eurhythmics, a method of integrating emotion with movement through the use of exercises that match movements to musical rhythms.

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Teachers included La Sylphe, Mikhail Mordkin, Madame Elizaveta Anderson-Ivantzoff, Elsa Findley, Bird S. Larson, Emily Hewlitt, and James Murray. All were experts in a particular aspect of movement training, although some were not theatre people. Mikhail Mordkin, for example, had been a principal dancer with the Bolshoi Ballet, and he had partnered with the great ballerina Ana Pavlova. He was known for his athletic style and his creation of three-dimensional characters.[24] While still in Moscow, he often had been invited by Stanislavsky to teach the technique of stage movement to the MAT company. In turn, his own sense of the dramatic was shaped by Stanislavsky's theories. Mordkin moved to the United States in 1923 where he created a company of his own that would provide the foundation for the American Ballet Theatre. Stella Adler, who took his classes at the Lab, was among those who remembered him fondly.[25]

Classes in voice also benefitted from high-quality instruction. Diction, phonetics, singing, and speech were taught by teachers that included Columbia University professors Margaret Prendergast McLean and James Tilly, as well as a Mr. Clew, Windsor P. Daggett, and Margarete Dessoff. Margaret McLean, like some of the Lab's other instructors, would follow Ouspenskaya to the Maria Ouspenskaya School of Theatre after the Lab closed.

The second part of the Lab's course of study, Arts and Theories Pertaining to the Theatre, aimed to increase

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general cultural awareness of the students. In the beginning, Boleslavsky arranged this portion of the training as a series of lectures, and lecturers included many famous figures from the professional theatre scene. Designers Robert Edmond Jones and Norman Bel Geddes, the critic Stark Young, and the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello were just a few of the famous theatre practitioners who spoke to members of the Lab. Midway through the Lab's existence, its leaders introduced regular classes in theatre history, art appreciation, and music appreciation. The Russian artist Alexander Koiransky was among the teachers of art appreciation, as were staff members from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The classes in Development of the Inner Means of Expression formed the core of the Lab's curriculum. Taught by Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya, they offered the students their primary exposure to the methods of Stanislavsky and his System. Boleslavsky described Development of the Inner Means of Expression as "the education and training of the soul." This included "psychological analysis of life and adaptation to the stage, training of the will [emotions] on the stage, training of the imagination, verisimilitude on the stage, [and] training of the actor's power to create on the stage real and phantastic beings."[26]

For his part, Boleslavsky assisted with teaching the basic techniques of acting. However, his main

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contribution as a teacher was to lecture whenever possible on his interpretation of Stanislavsky's method and the System. At one point during the Lab's history, he also offered a special class on directing, which is important because Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg, who would be instrumental in bringing the System to future theatre practitioners, were members.[27] Since Boleslavsky's directing duties both inside the Lab and outside in the professional theatre often conflicted with his teaching duties, he could not lecture on a regular basis. Nevertheless, when he was free to lecture, he might speak for hours at a time. He also gave informal talks and demonstrations for the entire student body of the Lab.

The one steady aspect of the Lab's training was Maria Ouspenskaya. Her class, The Technique of Acting, was the one class that everyone was required to take.[28] In it, she employed exercises and studies similar to those used by the First Studio, as well as scene work. Students needing coaching on specific roles or problems could receive private lessons outside of class, but group work was encouraged. Madame, as her students called her, was both feared and respected as a teacher, but she provided consistency in the Lab, particularly as Boleslavsky became increasingly involved with outside projects. She also assisted with determining who would be accepted into the Lab.

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Admission to the Lab required taking an entrance exam in which the prospective student performed both a memorized scene and an improvised pantomime, in addition to giving a demonstration of vocal range.[29] Once accepted, the student was guided to specific classes that might remedy individual problems. However, most new students faced the same rigorous program in their acting class; they were required to work for several months on simple exercises and studies before they could move to scene work and play performance. All students were also responsible for cleaning and maintaining the Lab's facilities.

The Lab opened its doors on 14 November 1923 at 40 East 60th Street, an apartment consisting of a front parlor and a back room.[30] A highlight of the Lab's first year was the formation of an acting troupe known as The Acting Company. In the spring of 1925, near the end of the Lab's second academic year, the Acting Company finally presented its first production for a paying audience, The Sea-Woman's Cloak by Amelie Rives Troubetzkoy. The show's success inspired playwright Rachel Crothers to write a letter to the New York Times in which she praised the production, citing one scene where the acting was "so much greater and more sincere than one usually finds in the professional theatre that it is amazing and unbelievable."[31] Bolstered by such praise, the Acting Company began to present full seasons of productions, starting in the fall of 1925.

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For the 1925-1926 season the group presented a new production of William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, a revival of The Sea-Woman's Cloak, and an adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter. Eugene Labiche's The Straw Hat, Thornton Wilder's The Trumpet Shall Sound, Clemence Dane's Granite, and Lynn Riggs' Big Lake comprised the 1926-1927 season. For the 1927-1928 season, the acting troupe performed Knut Hamsun's At the Gate of the Kingdom, Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing, a pantomime by Arthur Schnitzler called The Bridal Veil, Jules Romains' Dr. Knock, and Martine by Jean Jacques Bernard. For the 1929-1930 season, the group performed Anton Chekhov's The Three Sisters, Where It Is Thin, It Breaks by Ivan Turgenev, and two vaudeville farces by Miguel de Cervantes, The Pretended Basque and The Jealous Old Man. Financial problems forced a cessation of productions during the 1928-1929 season.

Although few of the Acting Company's productions received the favorable critical response awarded to The Sea-Woman's Cloak, the group's actors persevered. After all, the productions provided members of the Acting Company with valuable performance experience not readily available in the commercial theatre. The productions also gave the company members a chance to put their knowledge of the System to practical use, often under the guidance of Boleslavsky, who directed many of the early shows. Ouspenskaya also influenced the work of the company.[32]

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Scene work and exercises in her class enhanced the development of most productions, and Madame stepped in whenever necessary to provide individual coaching or an analysis of problematic scenes. She sometimes observed rehearsals.

In August of 1924, the Lab moved to an apartment on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village, a location that previously had been occupied by the Provincetown Players. It was the second move for the company, as it had been forced to move from its original site to a house on Park Avenue earlier in the year. Other moves would follow in the ensuing years, placing constant strain on the Lab's meager finances. This inability to find a permanent home would play a major part in the group's eventual demise.

While the Lab struggled to establish a permanent residence, Ouspenskaya found a home with the Boleslavskys. The couple invited her to share their apartment sometime during the course of the MAT's American tours, and Ouspenskaya's stay lasted for several years.[33] The arrangement ended when Ouspenskaya set fire to her bed one night with one of the little black cigars she often smoked. She had fallen asleep after drinking. The Boleslavkys evicted her.[34]

Financial necessity likely played a part in Ouspenskaya's living arrangement. She certainly received some sort of stipend during her first year with the Lab, but the exact terms are unknown. Whether or not she

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possessed a formal contract from the Lab during the summer and fall of 1924 is also uncertain, but later correspondence seems to indicate that some sort of formal monetary arrangement existed. In a letter from Herbert Stockton to Ouspenskaya dated 1 January 1925, Stockton suggests that Ouspenskaya had received a salary from the Acting Company prior to the Lab's reorganization in December of 1924.[35] When the Lab reorganized, she received a formal contract dated 12 December 1924 that specifies a weekly salary of $40.00 for the period of 29 December 1924 to 14 November 1925.[36] In addition, her contract included a clause that allowed her to pursue outside theatrical enterprises, including teaching or acting, as long as they did not interfere with the activities of the Lab.

Although Ouspenskaya was committed to her teaching, she readily accepted acting engagements. In the fall of 1924 she appeared as Paris Pigeons in Stark Young's The Saint, which was produced by members of the Provincetown Players, who asked Boleslavsky to direct when the original direction proved inadequate.[37] Harold Clurman appeared in a small role. This early experience of working with the Russians and Lee Strasberg's enthusiastic descriptions of the Lab's training program inspired Clurman to register in November of 1926 for the directing class offered by Boleslavsky at the Lab. Boleslavsky's direction of The Saint, Clurman said, "proved

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instructive, because Boleslavsky was a man of the theatre from top to toe."[38]

The Saint, which opened at the Greenwich Village Theatre on 12 October 1924, tells the story of an idealistic student who deserts the seminary to seek the meaning of life with a travelling variety show touring Mexico.[39] In her first English-speaking role, Ouspenskaya played a bird trainer, one of the more colorful and exotic members of the travelling troupe. Unfortunately, The Saint found little favor with the critics, who spoke strongly about the production's lack of vitality. Their few words of commendation went to the scenic design, Boleslavsky's staging of a religious procession, and Ouspenskaya's performance.[40] "The cheers for Saturday night's audience were rather for Maria Ouspenskaya, stepping from the ensemble of the Moscow Art Theatre to play her first role in English--and to play it, to the astonishment of everyone, easily and colloquially," wrote the critic for the New York Times.[41] The reviewer for the Herald-Tribune echoed this praise: "On Saturday night the audience was enthusiastic over the acting of Marie Ouspenska [sic], late of the Moscow Players, who impersonated mournfully the discarded sweetheart of a vaudeville actor."[42]

Ouspenskaya enjoyed the role of Paris Pigeons, although it produced some unexpected problems. In an autobiographical sketch written while she was working

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on The Saint, she talks about the difficulty of acting in a play "written in such bright colors with such a deep and vigorous psychology."[43] She suggests that actors who perform in the play "must develop in themselves everything great and deep and put in it a large piece of their own hearts."[44] Although she confesses that Paris Pigeons is a better role than anything she has dreamed about in the "boldest flight" of her imagination, she worries about two things: developing the part fully and acting in English for the first time.

Years later Ouspenskaya remembered the part of Paris Pigeons because it led to her first encounter with the American practice of "typecasting," a problem she would struggle with for the rest of her career. She described the experience to a Hollywood reporter:

> Shortly after the run [of The Saint] was completed I had a call from a producer who assured he had just the role. "There won't be much to learn," he said, "just change your costume, make-up, and there you are." I took the play home to read. The producer had told the truth. I was still a bird trainer, only this time my specialty was to be cockatoos. I didn't take the part.45

Ouspenskaya's experience with The Saint led her to improve her English skills, as did a problematic attempt to buy iodine in a store: "One day I wanted to buy some iodine but I couldn't ask for it because I didn't know how to say it in English."[46] She sought help at Columbia University where she studied with Professor James Tilly. His assistant, Margaret McLean, became a close friend

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who would work for Ouspenskaya at her schools in New York and Hollywood. In later years, McLean gained prominence in her own right as a teacher at New York University and the author of several books about speech, including Good American Speech, which sets forth a phonetics-oriented method of speech study.[47]

The 1924-1925 season represented a period of stabilization for the Lab as its classes gained a positive reputation and work continued on several possible plays for performance. During this time, Stella Adler viewed one of the unofficial performances of The Sea Woman's Cloak. The actress, who would later become well-known for her work with the Group Theatre, described her experience:

> I don't recall the date, but I do recall being taken to a very small, ground-floor apartment. . . . There were maybe twenty chairs in the room. And I saw the most beautiful thing I had ever seen on the stage in this small room--some miracle performance. It was directed by Boleslavsky, and in a far corner of the room watching it was Madame Ouspenskaya.48

Beginning in the summer of 1925, Ouspenskaya apparently began a series of summer activities unconnected to the work of the Lab, although details are sketchy. For example, an Equity contract shows that she was offered the part of the princess' aunt in a production of The Swan at the Casino in Newport, Rhode Island, during the summer of 1925.[49] It is unclear whether or not Ouspenskaya accepted the role, but rehearsals were to begin on July

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24th, and the play was scheduled to open July 31st and run for one week.

A letter from Frances Youtz, the executive secretary of the National Student Forum, mentions looking forward to Ouspenskaya's address at a summer conference of college students in June of 1926.[50] And various newspaper clippings indicate that Ouspenskaya performed with other summer theatres besides the Casino during the time she spent with the Lab. For example, two clippings from the Poughkeepsie Eagle-News mention her performance as Maria Depa, a domineering grandmother, in a production of G. Martinez Sierra's The Romantic Young Lady at the Elverhoj Theatre in Milton, New Jersey, that opened on 22 July 1929.[51] One of the clippings suggests that she may have appeared in the same play at the Newport Casino the previous summer. It is unclear whether or not Ouspenskaya appeared at the Casino in 1928, but a letter written to Ouspenskaya on 8 July 1927 seems to confirm an earlier Casino appearance in The Romantic Young Lady.[52] The letter's author, Helen Ingersoll, requests Ouspenskaya's participation in a production of the play at the Casino during the summer of 1927. Ingersoll's letter mentions that rehearsals were to begin the week of August 8th, and performances, consisting of five evening dates and one matinee, were to begin August 16th.

A program from the Millbrook Theatre shows that Ouspenskaya reprised the role of Maria Pepa there during

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the 1930 summer season.[53] Arthur Sircum, a member of the Lab, directed the production, and it ran from July 21st through July 26th. The program mentions that Ouspenskaya recently had become an American citizen.

Although her summer activities may have taken her to several venues outside New York City, Ouspenskaya's main focus remained on the Lab. She continued her work as a teacher after the Lab moved to new quarters at 107 West 58th Street in the summer of 1925. The space contained the group's first permanent theatre, with a structure similiar to that used at the First Studio.[54] A stage about twenty feet deep rose about two or three feet from the floor within a proscenium about thirty feet wide. The auditorium area featured seating that sloped upward from the stage through the use of graduated levels of platforms, and it held less than one hundred people.

The Lab opened its first subscription season with Twelfth Night on 15 October 1925.[55] It received a favorable reception, as did the reopening of The Sea Woman's Cloak on 4 November 1925. The third production of the 1925-1926 season, an adaptation of The Scarlet Letter, was not well-received. Nevertheless, the Lab had finally achieved a measure of recognition for its potential as a significant theatrical force.

But the 1925-1926 season represented the beginning of the end for the Lab as Boleslavsky grew increasingly busy with outside activities. At the same time that he

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produced three plays in the Lab, Boleslavsky also directed three plays for the professional New York stage: Rudolph Friml's The Vagabond King, William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew, and Cornelia Otis Skinner's Captain Fury. Boleslavsky's outside work brought him financial and professional rewards, but his absences irreparably damaged his relations with the Lab.[56]

By the end of 1925, Ouspenskaya's outside activities also increased. In December, George Pierce Baker, who was famous for having taught at Harvard a playwriting class attended by some of America's most promising writers, invited her to lecture at Yale.[57] Ouspenskaya responded with misgiving:

> Boleslavsky told me that you thought of arranging some kind of special lecture for me. I am very much confused by it because I have never lectured and it seems to me not in my nature. What I am doing all my life is to give people experience after someone else lectures. All my work here is giving technique and practice for Boleslawsky's lectures.
>
> Of course I know what I am doing in my work, but I can't put it into words. I could answer questions, and I would like to do my best. I love your work and your ideas. Maybe you will be so kind as to find a way to use those few things that I know about the stage.[58]

In lieu of a lecture, Ouspenskaya presented a demonstration of her methods with a group of Lab students on 12 December 1925. Ouspenskaya's connection with Baker apparently continued for several years afterward because Baker speaks of inviting her to attend a conference in a letter written in 1927.[59]

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In February of 1926, Ouspenskaya appeared as Fiametta in a revival of Sem Benelli's The Jest at the Plymouth Theatre.[60] The play, which opened February 4th, was a four-act melodrama of revenge set in Italy during the time of Lorenzo the Magnificent. The 1926 revival, which starred Basil Sydney and Alphonz Ethier, received fewer accolades than the original 1919 production, which starred Lionel and John Barrymore. Nevertheless, Ouspenskaya earned positive notice for her performance: "Maria Ouspenskaya has been drafted for the role of the blind woman in the third act--originally played by Gilda Varesi--and brings the right smoldering quality to her single scene."[61]

By the end of the Lab's 1925-1926 season, Ouspenskaya had made significant progress in building her American career. During the summer of 1926, she also saw improvement in her private life after Richard and Natasha Boleslavsky bought a second-hand Ford, went househunting, and purchased an old farmhouse with a mill in Bridgewater, Connecticut.[62] Dubbed the "Red Mill," the house became the site of frequent visits by the younger members of the Lab's company. More important, an outbuilding was remodelled, and it became Ouspenskaya's summer residence.[63]

When the Lab resumed activities for its 1926-1927 season, the organization faced another move, this time to 145 East 58th Street. For Ouspenskaya, the new season included an increase in work outside the Lab. From October

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to December of 1926, she seems to have taught up to two hours per week at the Neighborhood Playhouse, in addition to performing her regular Lab duties.[64] At the same time, she acted the role of Herlofs-Marte in a new production of The Witch.

Ouspenskaya's appearance in The Witch at the Greenwich Village Theatre in November of 1926 marked her third attempt at an English-speaking role.[65] Based on the topic of witchburning in Bergen in 1574, the play evolves into a tale of guilty love between a young wife and her husband's son.[66] The Witch was John Masefield's adaptation from the Norwegian text of H. Wiers-Jenssen, and it starred Alice Brady.

The critic Brooks Atkinson describes The Witch as a "stately and unsteady drama."[67] In his unenthusiastic review, he cites a break in the continuity of the play's theme, verbosity, and the slow pace of the acting as negative aspects of the production.

But Ouspenskaya escaped negative criticism. She played the role of Herlofs-Marte, a former companion to the young wife. Herlofs-Marte is hounded by the town guards and the townspeople who believe her to be a witch. She hides, but the guards find her and twist her arms until she confesses. "Miss Ouspenskaya summons all the terror and panic in that incident," states Atkinson.[68] A review in Time also praises the truth of her acting:

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"Act I discloses the populace in pursuit of a witch made fearsomely real by Mme. Ouspenskaya."[69]

The high level of accomplishment of Ouspenskaya's acting becomes more apparent when one notes that the play describes the character of Herlofs-Marte as "a little woman, old and wrinkled, about 78 years old" with a "face wild and white with terror" and "clothes in rags" and "hands bloody."[70] At the time she played the role, Ouspenskaya was just thirty-nine years old and still struggling to learn English. Her personal script, found in the collection at UCLA, reveals comments written in Russian and phonetic markings used to assist with pronunciation.

Ouspenskaya's growing facility with the English language gave her the confidence to act in plays outside the Lab, but she often used student assistants to help with her teaching. Her assistants for the 1926-1927 season at the Lab were Ann Hitchcock and Helen Schoeni. Marion Crowne, who later married another Lab student named Francis Fergusson, replaced Schoeni early in the year and served as an assistant for subsequent seasons as well.[71]

During the spring of 1927, Ouspenskaya served on a committee to choose actors for a reorganization of the Acting Company.[72] More important, she acted as advisor to the Lab production of Lynn Riggs' Big Lake, which opened on 8 April 1927.[73] Although Boleslavsky usually oversaw the production of plays in the Lab, a student named George

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Auerbach was allowed to direct Big Lake under the guidance of Ouspenskaya. This arrangement let Boleslavsky leave for London during the second week of February to direct a production of The Vagabond King, which he had already successfully directed on Broadway.

In the fall of 1927, the Lab relocated to the site of a former brewery at 218-224 East 54th Street. At the same time, the school took on the name of the Theatre Arts Institute. During the 1927-1928 season, the Lab aired two radio programs derived from Acting Company productions: a reading of Clemence Dane's play Granite and a piano performance of the musical score from Arthur Schnitzler's pantomime The Bridal Veil. Granite, which the Lab produced onstage in the spring of 1927, had been the group's first popular success.

In addition to her regular Lab duties for the 1927-1928 season, Ouspenskaya appeared as Curtis in a modern dress production of The Taming of the Shrew that opened at the Garrick Theatre on 25 October 1927.[74] Good reviews led to a run of 175 performances, with Basil Sydney as Petruchio and Mary Ellis in the role of Katherine. The critic for the New York Times described Ouspenskaya as one of the favorites of the show.[75]

In her later years, Ouspenskaya claimed that she was too old to be flattered by newspapers and good reviews; she tried instead to gauge the reaction of audience members and "stage hands, property men, and electricians."[76]

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"If they respect me, I know my performance is good," she asserted. "If they don't, I know it is bad." She gives an example:

> During the entire engagement of The Taming of the Shrew, the fireman never missed a single performance. He would explain this by saying that he knew each performance would bring something new, something different in my interpretation. This praise I shall never be too old to appreciate.77

As much as she enjoyed praise from her colleagues, Ouspenskaya also certainly valued the money she earned from her professional work. In fact, finding work outside the Lab was probably a financial necessity for Ouspenskaya. A document listing the pay of Lab teachers for the 1927-1928 season shows that Ouspenskaya earned sixty-five dollars per week for a scheduled twelve hours of teaching at the same time that Boleslavsky earned one hundred dollars per week.[78] However, financial problems in the spring of 1928 forced the Lab to renege on its payments. Teachers finished the year with IOU's.

Continued financial problems forced the Lab to scrap its schedule of productions for the 1928-1929 season, even though the group had received a personal contribution of ten thousand dollars from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. during the summer of 1928.[79] Creative moneymaking ventures, such as renting space to other theatre groups and using students as stagehands, did little to ease resulting tensions.

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Boleslavsky finally severed his connection to the Lab during the 1928-1929 season. Before doing so, he directed some experimental Lab productions and taught a class called "The Art of Theatre," but his focus had turned to the professional theatre scene outside the Lab where he directed three plays, including Judas, a Broadway production that starred Basil Rathbone. He also supervised technical production for a staging of Macbeth that featured designs by Gordon Craig. When the plays he directed received negative reviews, Boleslavsky decided to turn his back on the New York stage; he became discouraged with the commercial theatre's inability to support artistic experimentation. Since movies provided more lucrative financial rewards than the theatre, Boleslavsky headed for Hollywood on 3 April 1929 to direct his first American film, The Awful Truth.[80] Prior to leaving New York, he divorced Natasha and married Norma Drury, a pretty young pianist he had met during rehearsals of the Broadway show Mr. Moneypenny. Although Boleslavsky's move to the West Coast was thought to be temporary, he never returned. Ouspenskaya's feelings on the matter are unknown, but it is likely that the permanency of the move surprised her as much as it did everyone else at the Lab. A letter written to Miriam Stockton by Francis Fergusson on 5 September 1929 suggests this: "I suspect that Boley is preparing something characteristic to knock us down with; something nice like a four-year contract on the coast,

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for instance," Fergusson writes. "I wrote Madame Ouspenskaya a very urgent letter about ten days ago, and have had no reply. I fear she may have heard something bad from Boley, and may be making sure before she speaks."[81]

With the departure of Boleslavsky, the Lab embarked on a search for a new artistic director. The two main contenders were Maria Germanova (1884-1940), a former MAT member then in Paris, and Alla Nazimova. However, Germanova accepted the post before Nazimova could apply.[82] At the MAT, Germanova had performed several important roles, including Calpurnia in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (1904), Agnes in Ibsen's Brand (1906), and Grushenka in Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov (1910). During the 1920's, she had headed the Prague company of the MAT, which toured the cities of Europe. By hiring Germanova, the Lab hoped to benefit from the prestige of the actress's international reputation.

In the meantime, Ouspenskaya continued to offer a steady presence at the Lab by teaching her course in acting. Prior to the arrival of Germanova on 13 October 1929, Ouspenskaya also agreed to appear as Ase in a Lab production of Peer Gynt. Plans changed with Germanova's arrival; she decided to present Anton Chekhov's The Three Sisters instead. The production opened on 8 January 1930, with Germanova in the role of Masha and Ouspenskaya as

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Anfisa, the servant.[83] It was the first time staff members had appeared in a Lab production.

Germanova's tenure at the Lab proved disastrous. More interested in promoting herself than in the education of the students, she quickly made enemies. Her imperious style, profligate spending, and criticism of the Lab's operations earned her the ire of many in the Lab. Francis Fergusson, one of the Lab's most highly respected members, and Ouspenskaya both threatened to quit.[84] Germanova finally resigned after both The Three Sisters and Scribe's A Glass of Water received negative reviews. She left for Paris in April of 1930.

Although Germanova created much unhappiness at the Lab during the 1929-1930 season, the organization's main problem continued to be its financial instability. Throughout the year, the Lab's board of directors sought new ways to make money, especially after the stock market crashed in October of 1929, forcing many students to quit and thereby reducing income from tuition. The Lab's board tried unsuccessfully to form alliances with film and radio companies, as well as with two well-respected professional groups, the Coburn Players, who were headed by the well-known actor Charles Coburn, and Eva Le Galliene's Civic Repertory Theatre. The board also offered special classes for persons unconnected to the world of professional theatre.

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Ouspenskaya apparently assisted in the effort to save the Lab by agreeing to teach some of the classes for amateurs. Lab records show that she and Marion Crowne offered a special class in the Technique of Acting for twenty members of the Junior League.[85] Founded in 1901 as a service organization designed to teach socially prominent young women to perform community service, the Junior League actively promoted children's theatre during the twenties. Whether or not the group's class actually occurred is unknown. That it was offered is significant because it reveals the extent of the Lab's desperation to earn money by any possible means.

In the spring of 1930, Norman Bel-Geddes and Blanche Yurka invited Ouspenskaya to join a new Philadelphia theatre group that was scheduled to begin performing the following fall.[86] Fearful of the damage her acceptance would cause, the board at the Lab advised her to refuse the offer. Since no record exists of her work with the new company, she apparently followed the board's advice.

Unfortunately, all attempts to save the Lab proved unsuccessful. The Depression had worsened the Lab's already difficult financial plight. Faced with inadequate finances due to slim box office returns, loss of tuition monies, and sparse donations, the Lab neared its end. By the end of the 1929-1930 season on 1 June 1930, prospects for the future appeared grim.

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Unwilling to accept the organization's impending demise, fifteen Lab members travelled to Woodstock, New York, to perform a summer theatre program. The group hoped to maintain a core acting group in the event that the board might find last-minute funding. However, salvation wasn't forthcoming. By the end of June in 1930, the Lab officially halted its operations forever.[87]

The Lab's legacy continued in the work of many of its students.[88] For example, Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman, and Stella Adler incorporated what they had learned into the practices of the Group Theatre in the 1930's, an American performing ensemble that tried to emulate the MAT. Founded in 1931 by Strasberg, Clurman, and Cheryl Crawford, the Group Theatre successfully applied Stanislavsky's teachings to numerous productions bound for the commercial stage that featured plays by socially conscious dramatists including Paul Green, John Howard Lawson, Sidney Kingsley, Irwin Shaw, Robert Ardrey, and Clifford Odets. When several Group Theatre members, most notably Franchot Tone, John Garfield, Lee J. Cobb, and Elia Kazan, went to Hollywood to pursue movie careers, they carried the System with them.[89] After the demise of the Group Theatre in 1941, Clurman worked primarily as a director, while Adler and Strasberg continued to teach. Adler eventually formed her Conservatory, and Strasberg became head of the popular Actor's Studio in the late 1940's, where he taught a new generation of

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actors, such as Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, Eli Wallach, E. G. Marshall, Kim Hunter, and Maureen Stapleton. Strasberg's own interpretation of Ouspenskaya's teachings came to be known as "the Method," and his Actor's Studio became the most influential source for actor training in America throughout the 1950's and the 1960's. Although Strasberg's "Method" training always had its detractors (who argued that it represented a negative corruption of Stanislavsky's System), its strong influence upon American stage, film, and television acting persisted until Strasberg's death in 1982.

Other former students of Ouspenskaya at the Lab also built distinguished theatre careers.[90] They include community theatre leader Constance McLain; Hollywood producer Harold Hecht; Broadway and community theatre director Arthur Sircom; and Herbert V. Gellendre, who later taught at the Neighborhood Playhouse, the American Academy, The Theatre Wing, and the Pittsburgh Playhouse. Francis and Marion Crowne Fergusson organized and directed the theatre program at Bennington College in Vermont.

Another legacy of the Lab is Boleslavsky's Acting: The First Six Lessons, a distillation of his Lab lectures published in 1933.[91] Except for brief descriptions included in Stanislavsky's autobiography, My Life in Art, Boleslavsky's book represents the first explanation of the System published in English.

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"Concentration, memory of emotion, dramatic action, characterization, observation, and rhythm are the subjects of six lessons, couched in the form of a series of encounters over a number of years between an 'I' and an eager, initially naive aspiring actress, a disarming young woman called (in those pre-feminist days) the Creature," explains Foster Hirsch, who wrote about the Lab's role in the history of the Actor's Studio.[92] Hirsch expands on his explanation of Boleslavsky's teachings:

> Threaded through the lessons is Boleslavsky's reiterated catechism that acting is a high and exacting art that demands control of the body, the will, the intellect, the emotions, and crucially, the soul. (If "soul" sounds too formidable, Boleslavski suggests substituting imagination.)93

Hirsch notes that Boleslavsky viewed the actor's spiritual training as the most important part of his work and "developed a series of what he called 'soul exercises' in relaxation, concentration, and training the affective memory, which, stripped of the spiritual overlay, were to supply the foundation for Lee Strasberg's work at the Actor's Studio."[94]

Boleslavsky's concern with the spiritual aspects of actor training suggests that he emphasized emotion in his teaching of the System, but Stella Adler disputes this notion. "Boleslavski called affective memory 'memory of emotion,'" she explains. "He told us how Stanislavski had changed his emphasis, and that it [memory of emotion] no longer held the central place in his theories.

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Following Stanislavski, Boleslavsky asked actors to focus more on the given circumstances of the play rather than on their own circumstances."[95] Francis Fergusson supported Adler's claim. From his own observation of the teachings of both Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya, he came to the conclusion that "action" had supplanted emotion as the most important aspect of acting technique. He states,

> "Action" was certainly the word we heard most frequently from them; from Boleslavski in his rehearsals and informal talks, from Madame in her classes in the techique of acting. "How t'is [sic] about Ahction?" Madame would demand in her coldest and hoarsest voice, affixing her monocle and scornfully puffing her little cigar. The actors, who had just done a scene or improvisation for her, would know that she had found their performance lacking in true feeling and motivation.96

J. W. Roberts, Boleslavsky's biographer, contends that Boleslavsky may have stressed memory of emotion during the early days of the Lab but changed his emphasis to action before 1927.[97] In fact, Boleslavsky spent the first weeks of a play's rehearsal period locating the main action or "spine" of each character and its progression of change throughout the play. In addition, he looked for the main action of the play, which he also called the "spine."

According to Francis Fergusson, the teaching of both Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya depended for a great part on demonstration, partly because their English was limited. However, their acting was superb. "I have seen Madame, who looked like a small withered witch, 'get' Juliet's

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action at some moment in her scene with Romeo, so completely that we perceived the childish spirit of Juliet more clearly than the visible Madame," he says. "Or she could frighten us, suddenly, by looking us in the eye with the murderous action of Macbeth."[98]

Ronald Willis contends that detailed reconstruction of Ouspenskaya's classes is impossible because she tailored each class to meet the needs of particular students.[99] But descriptions from former students and other sources provide a fairly clear picture of typical activities that occurred in those classes.

A brochure from the Lab's 1929-1930 season describes the format of Ouspenskaya's acting class as incorporating "improvisations, one-minute plays, [and] individual work in characterization, situation, and mood."[100] Lee Strasberg, who enrolled in the Lab in 1924, describes in his autobiography, A Dream of Passion, some of the specific improvisational exercises he encountered.[101] He remembers two particular exercises from his first day of class: (1) to walk around the room, once without a task and a second time moving books; and (2) to examine a matchbox. He also recalls improvisations from later classes, such as being directed to portray various animals to explore the behaviors that distinguish an actor from his roles, or being guided to perform fictional activities to build imagination and concentration, retrieving papers from the floor of one's room while suggesting emotion,

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for example, or trying to pass a half-open lion's cage without arousing the lion. A lengthy group exercise involved pretending to be a person awaiting the arrival of a ship and reacting when the ship suddenly explodes before docking.

Although exercises such as those described by Strasberg might appear meaningless out of the context of a class, they formed part of a well-organized plan. According to Boleslavsky's biographer, J. W. Roberts, classes followed a planned progression through which students "were intended to develop basic Stanislavskian elements, including concentration, relaxation, the control of the five senses, the use of images, affective memory, connection (translated as 'communion' by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood in An Actor Prepares), adjustment (which included consideration of the 'given circumstances'), and dramatic action."[102] Students moved from individual exercises that might explore a simple problem, like concentration on the construction of one's hand, to complicated improvisations with one or more partners. After several weeks, students finally began work on short prepared scenes involving two or more characters. "Ouspenskaya--and often Boleslavsky as well--analyzed and critiqued these scenes, pointing out specific problems and moments the actors had failed to accomplish satisfactorily," writes Roberts. "She would then suggest specific technical means which the student could employ to improve his work, and the

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scene would be repeated, incorporating the recommended technique."[103]

Boleslavsky's lectures on the theory behind the exercises complemented the work Ouspenskaya assigned in her classes, as did his analysis of the students' scenes and monologues. Elizabeth Fenner Gresham, who studied at the Lab during the 1926-1927 season, later recalled the mutually beneficial nature of the relationship between Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya:

> He counted on Ouspenskaya to limber us up and weed us out and she and her assistants did an heroic job. Many of us were finally able to be "threads going through the eyes of needles" and to "scramble like eggs," without feeling incredibly foolish. And the improvisation classes reached several highs.104

Students like Gresham might remember the excitement of their accomplishments, but probably a typical class with Ouspenskaya became an emotionally stressful experience. Donald Keyes, who studied at the Lab, describes the way a class might start:

> Seated in a large circle with Madame a little apart from the group, you were told in rather sharp, staccato tones, "Make for me friendly atmosphere." When this was done--usually in silence--the exercises began.105

Ronald Willis, who interviewed several Lab students, offers another common scenario for the beginning of a class with Ouspenskaya:

> Often she would seat herself in a chair with her feet on a footstool and her head covered by a shawl. Then she would light one of her small black cigars, and, peering intensely at

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> her students with her bright eyes, she would give the command to "begin."[106]

Both Keyes and Willis note that Ouspenskaya rarely offered praise, thereby increasing tensions. Francis Fergusson, who attended Ouspenskaya's classes, provides a colorful account of the experience:

> She terrified them in class. She would walk in. (She was very short, you know, very slender--she must have weighed about 95 pounds.) She walked in on her very high heels, carrying a pitcher and a glass. She would sit down and put the pitcher and glass there [on a table] and her monocle in one eye. Then she would have a drink; it looked like water, but it was gin. She would always say, "How 'tis about action." She would give them assignments to improvise some sort of scene that she would invent the situations for. If they didn't do well, she would raise hell with them.[107]

Ouspenskaya's austere manner and harsh criticism often reduced students to tears. The "tone" of her classes even led some students to quit the Lab altogether, as did future Group Theatre actress Ruth Nelson.[108] But most students managed to look past Ouspenskaya's severe classroom persona to learn from her comments. Willis adds that "those students who knew her outside the classroom report that she was at heart a loving, warm, and gentle person whose friendship they valued highly."[109] He suggests that her stern behavior in the classroom proceeded from her desire for perfection and a somewhat misguided pedagogical belief that she could free students from inhibitions and fears that might hinder their performances by breaking down personal barriers.

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Although most students eventually learned to overlook Ouspenskaya's professional eccentricities, they found it difficult to ignore aspects of her personal behavior. Her drinking, for example, often caused furtive smirks and secret laughter.[110] Seemingly unaware of her students' reactions, she smuggled alcohol into class under various guises such as a pitcher of water, a cup in a paper bag, or a druggist's bottle of "medicine." Francis Fergusson recalls that Ouspenskaya often developed a cough or a bad throat during class that would require a dose of "medicine."[111] The "medicine," which was actually bathtub gin in this era of Prohibition, was dispensed by the tablespoon by her current assistant. Sometimes Ouspenskaya's cough got so bad, particularly if class was not going well, that the assistant would have to administer repeated doses, often finishing a whole bottle. Foster Hirsch writes, "Some days she was incoherent, not because her English was inadequate, which it plainly was, but because she was inebriated."[112] Ouspenskaya clearly displayed symptoms of alcoholism, but no further mention of her drinking occurs in accounts of her work after the Lab closed. The matter remains a mystery.

Ouspenskaya unconsciously created additional amusement and gossip in the Lab with another aspect of her personal behavior, her dealings with Boleslavsky. "She had not been long at the Lab before its students reached a silent consensus; Ouspenskaya was deeply, painfully--

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embarrassingly in love with Boleslavsky," explains J. W. Roberts. "A few of the boys speculated that perhaps 'Madame's' relationship with Boleslavsky sometimes went beyond the purely 'spiritual.'"[113] In spite of what the students thought they saw, no reliable evidence exists to support the reality of a romantic relationship between the actress and her colleague. But the rumor of an intimate involvement between the Lab's two leaders might explain Natasha Boleslavsky's antipathy toward Ouspenskaya. According to Roberts, who spoke with her many times, Natasha "openly disliked Ouspenskaya and thought she was vastly overrated as an actress."[114]

Like all humans, Ouspenskaya had flaws. And sometimes friends and students did not hide their disfavor. However, even her enemies usually agreed that she was a gifted teacher. Ronald Willis writes that the most important feature of her teaching was her criticism: "Former students testify that her powers of observation were uncanny in their accuracy." He notes that she had a "remarkable ability" to observe a group exercise and to "dissect it afterwards, accurately describing each student's mood, motivation, action pattern, and emotion or the lack thereof."[115] Stella Adler speaks of her own experience:

> Her English was limited, so she couldn't help you there. . . . When I was playing Ophelia I went to her house and acted for her for hours. I knew if I did it for her I couldn't go off track. I watched her eyes. She knew the

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> truth--from a Russian sense, not an American sense.116

Lee Strasberg voices similar sentiments in a 1975 interview:

> Ouspenskaya was a marvelous actress . . . and a wonderful teacher, very precise and very concrete--not theoretic. She gave the actual exercises--simply, clearly, and precisely. And, of course, she was a marvelous observer. She could tell who was faking and who was real and was, therefore, very excellent from that point of view.117

Ouspenskaya's skills as a teacher apparently transcended any limitations she might have had with regard to speaking English or understanding American culture, and her success in the classroom proved that the System could be effectively adapted to American actor training. In partnership with Boleslavsky, she taught her American charges that they could improve the quality of their performances through the use of appropriate techniques and practice. Removed from the realm of mysterious inspiration, being a good actor became a learnable goal.

Ouspenskaya would take Stanislavsky's message to future students at her own schools in New York and Hollywood after the close of the Lab in 1930. Her years at the Lab paved the way for her future accomplishments. As an actress, she proved that she could perform capably in English, and she displayed the adaptability that would eventually take her to Hollywood as she moved freely from the artistic experimentation of groups like the Provincetown Players to commercial production on the

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Broadway stage. At the same time, she captured the attention of the New York critics and respected theatre artists. As an educator, she also proved her merits by teaching hundreds of students at the Lab and establishing vital contacts with other professional educators in American academia. More than theatre historians indicate, she kept the Lab intact, providing a stable influence when Boleslavsky became busy elsewhere. Ouspenskaya's experience at the Lab likely led her to decide to run her own schools in the future. With the dawn of the 1930's, Ouspenskaya had positioned herself to meet future challenges successfully on her own terms.

NOTES--CHAPTER 5

[1] Maria Ouspenskaya, "Marie Ouspensky," ts., Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA, 3.

[2] For more information, see previous chapter.

[3] Ouspenskaya, "Ouspensky" 4.

[4] Ronald A. Willis, "The American Laboratory Theatre," diss., U of Iowa, 1968, 21.

[5] Ouspenskaya, "Ouspensky" 2.

[6] J. W. Roberts, Richard Boleslavsky: His Life and Work in the Theatre (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981) 1-109; Willis, diss. 11-19. These sources provide most of the general biographical information on Richard Boleslavsky, including his background prior to the beginning of the American Laboratory Theatre.

[7] Roberts 106-109; Willis, diss. 30-35.

[8] Christine Edwards, The Stanislavsky Heritage (New York: New York University Press, 1965) 202; Alice Lewisohn Crowley, The Neighborhood Playhouse (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1959).

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[9] Roberts 40; Willis, diss. 108.

[10] Harold Clurman, The Fervent Years: The Story of the Group Theatre and the Thirties (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945) 1.

[11] Clurman 3.

[12] Foster Hirsch, A Method to Their Madness: The History of the Actor's Studio (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1984) 52.

[13] Hirsch 52.

[14] Willis, diss. 24-25.

[15] Oscar Brockett, History of the Theatre 5th ed. (Boston, London, Sydney, and Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1987) 627.

[16] Hirsch 53.

[17] The American Laboratory Theatre, program from 1927-1928 production season, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[18] Richard Boleslavsky, "Developing Acting Talent," unidentified clipping, n.d., Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[19] Wendy Smith, Real-Life Drama: The Group Theatre and America, 1931-1940 (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1990) 15.

[20] Hirsch 59.

[21] Hirsch 58.

[22] Roberts 146.

[23] Hirsch 62-64; Roberts 146-150; and Willis, diss. 50-52. These authors explain the Lab's three categories of training, listing specific classes and teachers.

[24] Gennody Smakov, The Great Russian Dancers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984) 239-299.

[25] Hirsch 62.

[26] Willis, diss. 51.

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[27] Roberts 231-236.

[28] Willis, diss. 92.

[29] Willis, diss. 52.

[30] Roberts and Willis both discuss the history of the Lab's operations and the productions of the Acting Company. Hirsch also provides a list of productions.

[31] Willis, diss. 83.

[32] Willis, diss. 125. Willis cites changes in Ouspenskaya's duties throughout his manuscript.

[33] Willis, diss. 30.

[34] Roberts 121. Before and after making her home with the Boleslavskys, Ouspenskaya may have lived in several different places. Writing on a photo in the UCLA collection lists Ouspenskaya's address for an unknown time during the second MAT tour as 201 East 62nd Street, Apt. 3. An undated binder in the same collection lists her address as 18 West 82nd Street. And a 1928 letter from Herbert Stockton, also in the UCLA collection, is addressed to Ouspenskaya at New York's Great Northern Hotel.

[35] Willis, diss. 34.

[36] Contract from The Laboratory Theatre for Maria Ouspenskaya, 12 Dec. 1924, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[37] Roberts 37.

[38] Roberts 37.

[39] New York Times 13 Oct. 1924.

[40] Roberts 150.

[41] New York Times 13 Oct. 1924.

[42] New York Herald-Tribune 13 Oct. 1924.

[43] Ouspenskaya, "Ouspensky" 4.

[44] Ouspenskaya, "Ouspensky" 4.

[45] Maria Ouspenskaya, "One Lone Foe of Typing," unidentified clipping, circa 1940, Ouspenskaya clipping

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file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[46] Inez Wallace, "It's Never Too Late to Act," unidentified clipping, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[47] Margaret Prendergast McLean, Good American Speech (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1952).

[48] Roberts 153.

[49] Contract for appearance in The Swan at the Casino in Newport, Rhode Island, 29 June 1925, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[50] Frances Youtz, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, 8 July 1927, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[51] Poughkeepsie Eagle-News 12 May 1929; Poughkeepsie Eagle-News 23 July 1929.

[52] Helen Ingersoll, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, 8 July 1927, Maria Ouspenskay Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[53] Program from the Millbrook Theatre, 1930, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[54] Roberts 151.

[55] Roberts 154-161. Roberts describes the season's productions.

[56] Roberts 173.

[57] George Pierce Baker, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, 2 Dec. 1925, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[58] Maria Ouspenskaya, letter to George Pierce Baker, 3 Dec. 1925, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[59] George Pierce Baker, letter to Maria Ouspenskaya, 7 February 1927, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

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[60] The Encyclopedia of the American Theatre, ed. Edwin Bronner (San Diego and New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1980) 246.

[61] New York Times 5 February 1926.

[62] Roberts 179.

[63] Roberts 121.

[64] Herbert Stockton, letter to Alice McCoy, 9 Aug. 1926, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. Other correspondence in the UCLA collection indicates that Ouspenskaya may have taught classes for the Neighborhood Playhouse as early as fall of 1924. However, an attempt to confirm this with the current Neighborhood Playhouse staff was unsuccessful.

[65] "A Moscow Theatre Alumna," New York Times 5 Dec. 1926.

[66] New York Times 19 Nov. 1926.

[67] New York Times 19 Nov. 1926.

[68] New York Times 19 Nov. 1926.

[69] Time 6 Dec. 1926.

[70] The Witch, personal script, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[71] Willis, diss. 165.

[72] Willis, diss. 176.

[73] Roberts 190-191.

[74] Willis, diss. 235.

[75] New York Times 26 Oct. 1927.

[76] Frances Dietz, ts., Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[77] Frances Dietz, ts., Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[78] Willis, diss. 221.

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[79] Willis, diss. 248.

[80] Roberts 221.

[81] Roberts 222.

[82] Willis, diss. 268.

[83] Willis, diss. 277.

[84] Roberts 222.

[85] Willis, diss. 272.

[86] Willis, diss. 289.

[87] Willis, diss. 291.

[88] Willis, diss. 385. Willis lists several former Lab students who later had successful theatre or film careers.

[89] John Garfield studied with Ouspenskaya, but sources are unclear about whether he did so at the Lab or at the Maria Ouspenskaya School of Theatre.

[90] Willis, diss. 386.

[91] Richard Boleslavsky, Acting: The First Six Lessons (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1933).

[92] Hirsch 64.

[93] Hirsch 64.

[94] Hirsch 64.

[95] Hirsch 64.

[96] Francis Fergusson, "The Notion of Action," The Tulane Drama Review vol. 9 (Fall 1964-Summer 1965) 85.

[97] Roberts 233-236. Roberts maintains that Lee Strasberg's excessive emphasis on the use affective memory, which caused dissension at the Group Theatre and future misunderstandings about Stanislavsky's teachings, resulted, in part, from a limited understanding of the workings of the System. Strasberg only attended the Lab for three or four months, which was not long enough to gain a thorough knowledge of the process being taught.

[98] Fergusson 85.

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[99] Willis, diss. 321.

[100] Ronald Willis, "The American Lab Theatre," The Tulane Drama Review vol. 9 (Fall 1964-Summer1965) 114.

[101] Lee Strasberg, A Dream of Passion (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1987) 67-68.

[102] Roberts 148.

[103] Roberts 148.

[104] Roberts 149-150.

[105] Roberts 147.

[106] Willis, diss. 324. Willis possesses audio-tapes of his interviews with former Lab students, as well as the business files from the Lab. In a brief 1995 phone interview, he offered direct access to his materials, but he suggested that most material relevant to Ouspenskaya's role in the Lab had already been culled for his dissertation or the Boleslavsky biography by J. W. Roberts, who spent many hours listening to the audiotapes. However, the paucity of other available primary sources explaining Ouspenskaya's work at the Lab leads one to hope that Willis' materials might still contain the answers to some mysteries about her life and the Lab. His collection might be a source for further study.

[107] Roberts 148.

[108] Roberts 208. Boleslavsky convinced Nelson to rejoin the Lab soon after she quit.

[109] Willis, diss. 22.

[110] Roberts 120.

[111] Roberts 120.

[112] Hirsch 62.

[113] Roberts 120

[114] Roberts 121

[115] Willis, diss. 323.

[116] Hirsch 62.

[117] Roberts 147.

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CHAPTER 6. THE THIRTIES: THE MARIA OUSPENSKAYA SCHOOL OF DRAMATIC ARTS, BROADWAY ACHIEVEMENTS, AND EARLY FILM WORK

> The actor's art cannot be taught. He must be born with ability. But the technique through which his talent can find expression--that can and must be taught.1

Those words prefaced each of the yearly brochures for Maria Ouspenskaya's New York school for actor training, the Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts.[2] Attributed to Richard Boleslavsky, with whom Ouspenskaya taught at the American Laboratory Theatre during the twenties, the slogan represents the school's philosophy. Ouspenskaya herself voiced a similar message as early as 1924: "You cannot and must not teach talent; you can and you must educate it and direct it and help it to develop itself and show its own beauty and force."[3] Not surprisingly, Ouspenskaya's commitment to education led her to start her own school after the Lab closed in the summer of 1930. During the height of the Great Depression, she would lead young actors to develop their talents, at the same time that she continued to develop her own talent through acting on Broadway and, eventually, performing in films.

Ouspenskaya found herself in a curious position after the close of the American Laboratory Theatre in 1930. For the first time since she arrived in America in 1923 as an actress with the Moscow Art Theatre, she was truly alone. Prior to 1930, she had worked within the

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protective confines of either Russia's MAT or the Lab in New York. With the end of the Lab, she had to depend upon her own devices to make a living. In what might be considered a testament to Ouspenskaya's independence, she chose to start her own school.

Available sources don't reveal the exact sequence of her activities after the close of the Lab or the official opening date of her New York school, but they suggest that Ouspenskaya never lacked for work. She appeared as Maria Pepa, the grandmother, in a production of G. Martinez Sierra's The Romantic Young Lady at the Millbrook Theatre during the summer of 1930.[4] At some point that same summer, she also may have started her first summer school at a site in Mount Kisco, New York.[5] Then she returned to New York City to teach.

Conflicting information exists with regard to the beginnings of the school. It may have had its official opening as late as 1931.[6] But various brochures suggest that the school had its start even earlier, perhaps while Ouspenskaya was still teaching at the Lab.[7] Other publicity materials indicate a starting date of 1930. For example, a publicity-related background sketch relates that the school started after the Lab ended in 1930: "After the close of the American Laboratory Theatre, Madame started her first summer school in Mt. Kisco and in the fall of the same year opened her dramatic school, which was then located on Riverside Drive."[8]

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Originally located on Riverside Drive, the school later moved to 383 Central Park West. In April of 1933, it moved to 27 West 67th Street, where it stayed until Ouspenskaya moved to Hollywood.[9] Unlike the Lab, the Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts managed to retain a long-term home, thus achieving a sense of stability. George Birse and Frances Deitz handled business matters and finance.

The course of study offered at Ouspenskaya's New York school resembled that offered earlier by the Lab. Students attended a two-year program of classes wherein they studied acting technique and related physical work in areas such as voice, movement, and makeup.[10] A typical term lasted from the beginning of October through the end of May, although no classes were held on national holidays or during Christmas week and Easter week.

The core of the program of study at Ouspenskaya's school was a class in the technique of acting conducted personally by Madame Ouspenskaya and an assistant, wherein students moved from performing simple exercises and studies to acting in scenes and short plays. A 1932 flier describes the class:

> For six hours weekly, in small groups, students are given exercises in improvisation, the staging of one-minute plays and individual work in characterization, situation, and mood. Once a week students will present for criticism and direction scenes from modern and classical plays. They acquire, thereby, the technique of acting which includes the control of feelings and

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> emotions, with the development of memory and feeling.[11]

Ouspenskaya also offered private assistance to students who might need extra help and private lessons to any actors, singers, or dancers who requested aid in the creation of a particular role.

Ouspenskaya evaluated the specific needs of individual students and referred them to other instructors for additional classes as necessary. Study with other instructors cost extra, but students had the chance to work with a talented roster of theatre artists who possessed varied and impressive professional credentials. Although the school's list of faculty changed with every new season, each instructor had qualifications worth mention.

One of the school's most valued instructors was another former MAT actress, Tamara Daykarhanova (1892-?).[12] Daykarhanova left the MAT to join the company of Baliev's revue, Chauve Souris, for which she played numerous roles during its European and American tours. After the company disbanded, she and her husband, Sergei Vassilief, stayed in America.

While associated with Ouspenskaya's school, Daykarhanova assisted her colleague in teaching some of the school's more advanced actors in a special class known as the Actor's Group.[14] Every four or five weeks, members of the Actors Group presented scenes from modern and

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classical plays before an audience that contained producers, critics, and agents. A program from one of those recitals, dated 24 Feb. 1935, lists ten scenes and their authors: Mr. Grant by Arthur Goodrich, Woman of Andros by Thornton Wilder, Jigsaw by Dawn Powell, In the Waiting Room by Louise Perkins, The Children's Hour by Lillian Hellman, Private Lives by Noel Coward, Laughing Woman by George Daviot, As Husbands Go by Rachel Crothers, Birthday by A. M. Stuart and P. Stuart, and Beyond the Horizon, by Eugene O'Neill.[15] Mildred Dunnock, who became a respected stage and movie actress, was one of the students in that night's recital.

In addition to her work with the Actor's Group, Daykarhanova assisted Ouspenskaya in other ways. She taught classes in stage makeup twice a week during the regular school term, and, at least once, she co-taught a summer workshop.[16] However, her stay at the School of Dramatic Arts was brief, and she left to form her own school by 1936.[17] Along with Vera Soloviova and Andrius Jilinsky, who were also former members of the MAT, Daykarhanova promoted a version of the System that differed from the one taught by Ouspenskaya in that it was heavily colored by the theories of Yevgeny Vakhtangov and Michael Chekhov. Screenwriter Horton Foote was one of Daykarhanova's students at the School for the Stage, as was Beatrice Straight, who had previously studied at the

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Lab. Author Foster Hirsch writes that Straight later voiced her preferences:

> "She [Ouspenskaya] was not a very good teacher," says Beatrice Straight, "though she was a wonderful character. Another Moscow emigre, Tamara Dayakhanova [sic], with whom I also studied, was a wonderful teacher. It was she who really understood the System."18

Daykarhanova's departure from Ouspenskaya's School of Dramatic Arts left a void, but other instructors soon took over her duties. Over the years, the faculty included Margaret Eichenwald, Alice Pratt, Madalyn O'Shea, Margaret Prendergast McLean, Richard Gaines, Mary Harris, Marian Rich, Jacques Cartier, Alexander Koiransky, Serge Strenkowsky, and Jane Inge.[19] Most of the instructors taught in a particular area of specialty. For example, Eichenwald, McLean, Inge, and Rich offered classes in various aspects of voice training and speech.

Margaret Eichenwald gave private lessons in voice training, the correction of breathing, and voice control.[20] She was emminently qualified to do so, having served as the Prima Donna at the Imperial Grand in Moscow for many years, as well as a professor of singing at the Conservatory of Music of the Philharmonic Society of Moscow.

Margaret McLean, who had worked with Ouspenskaya at the Lab, had been a professor at New York University. She joined the faculty of the School for the Dramatic Arts sometime during the mid-1930's to teach two classes

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per week in "the scientific production of speech and voice and its application the needs of the theatre."[21] A brochure for the 1934-1935 school year states, "Through drill and exercises, students are taught to use good standard speech and are enabled to work in various dialects."[22] Since her early years at the Lab, McLean had gained reknown in American and international academic circles for her study of American speech and her creation of phonetics-based system of speech training. She would follow Ouspenskaya to Hollywood in the 1940's.

Another faculty member, Jane Inge, apparently taught with the school for only a brief period near the end of its time in New York. Inge offered classes twice a week "to develop quality, range, projection, flexibility, and resonance of the vocal mechanism through exercise in breath control, tone production and ear training."[23] In a brochure for the 1938-1939 season, she was described as the present head of the department of Speech and Dramatic Arts at the Woman's College of Rutgers University.

Marion Rich also served as a teacher for only a short time at Ouspenskaya's school. Her class was similar to that offered by Inge.[24] A trained singer, Rich had also taught classes at the Neighborhood Playhouse.

Movement training was another area of study that employed the services of more than one person. The two most important instructors were Alice Pratt and Jacques Cartier.

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During the early years of the school, Alice Pratt taught a class titled "Rhythmic Physical Re-education." In this course, students would "receive a system of exercises, scientifically planned and guided to meet the individual needs, making the body flexible and enabling the individual to acquire a conscious mental and physical control that gives freedom of action."[25] Pratt was an expert in anatomy who had once worked with Emmanuel Reicher, the German actor who was known for the psychological accuracy of his roles.[26]

Jacques Cartier assumed control of movement training duties near the end of the 1930's. "Jacques Cartier will teach a system of scientifically-planned body education, consisting of fundamental dance movements and all phases of balance and control actions," states a brochure from the 1939-1940 season. "In addition to giving students a poised, co-ordinated, controlled body, he will specialize in developing the combination of accurate movement with dramatic mood."[27] Cartier came to the School of Dramatic Arts as an internationally-known professional dancer with both stage and screen experience.

In addition to voice and movement training, Ouspenskaya's school also offered a course in makeup. After the departure of Daykarhanova, makeup duties apparently fell to Serge Strenkowsky.[28] Strenkowsky, an authority on the theory and practice of stage makeup, held ties to the Russian Theatrical Society and the Italian

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Theatrical Federation. He had authored a book titled The Art of Make-up [date and publisher unknown].

In addition to the regular faculty, Ouspenskaya also employed assistants whose main duties involved helping Madame to teach her class in the technique of acting. Madalyn O'Shea assisted during the early years of the school. Mary Harris undertook the job in later years. Madalyn O'Shea had studied with Ouspenskaya at the Lab.[29] She had also worked as a professional actress.

Like O'Shea, Mary Harris was a former student of Ouspenskaya.[30] Previous to assisting at the School of Dramatic Arts, she had worked as Director of Drama at Pomona College and Instructor of Acting at George Washington University. She had also acted with the Seattle Repertory Theatre and the Peterborough Players in New Hampshire, and she had co-directed at the Little Theatre of Padua Hills and the Portland Repertory Theatre. Harris would teach in Ouspenskaya's Hollywood school.

Other former members of the Lab who joined Ouspenskaya at the School of Dramatic Arts included Richard Houston Gaines and Alexander Koiransky. Gaines had studied with both Ouspenskaya and Boleslavsky at the Lab where he was also a member of the staff.[31] Later, he acted and directed at several theatres. His professional resumé included a job directing for the Peterborough Players, with whom Ouspenskaya conducted a summer acting workshop. At the School for Dramatic Arts, Gaines briefly served as

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co-director for Ouspenskaya's class in the technique of acting.

Alexander Koiransky had also worked on the staff of the Lab during the 1920's.[32] An accomplished man of the theatre, he had advised Konstantin Stanislavsky during the writing of My Life in Art. Prior to joining Ouspenskaya at her school, he had also taught at the Banff School of the University of Alberta and the Cornish School, where he was head of the drama department. During a brief period when Ouspenskaya added a third year to her school's course of study, Koiransky directed third-year students in their acting class.

As the decade progressed, Ouspenskaya gained increasing professional reknown. In 1935, former Lab students Lee Strasberg and Harold Clurman, who had become famous as leaders of the Group Theatre, lent their names to the publicity efforts for her School of Dramatic Arts. In an advertisement published in New Theatre Magazine, they say, "Maria Ouspenskaya is the finest teacher of acting it has been our pleasure to know."[33]

The success of the School for the Dramatic Arts and Ouspenskaya's popularity as a teacher became readily apparent when the actress travelled to Hollywood in 1936 to reprise the role of Baroness von Obersdorf in a film version of the 1934 Broadway play Dodsworth. She was besieged by film actors wanting coaching during her four-day long visit. An article in the Portland Press

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Herald describes her dilemma: "Ouspenskaya spent the first day answering the telephone, but thereafter the studio refused to accept calls for her, and when not working she hid out in an obscure retreat with the phone disconnected."[34]

By the end of the 1930's, Ouspenskaya had unquestionably gained the respect of her peers for her work as an actress and teacher. Brochures from her school, although admittedly designed to recruit students, contain glowing "tributes" from several famous theatre figures.[35] The brochure for the 1938-1939 season includes an excerpt from critic Stark Young's novel The Torches Flare, in which he describes what a fine thing it would be for one of the characters to study with Ouspenskaya. Also, the Russian actress Alla Nazimova offers her testimony:

> To reach solid success on the stage, one must have besides ability,--real, thorough training. In my opinion there is no one in America more qualified to teach this art than Madame Ouspenskaya, who teaches the same technique I had the privilege of receiving when I studied in the school of the Moscow Art Theatre.36

Next, John Mason Brown, critic for the New York Evening Post, praises Ospenskaya's acting:

> Madame Ouspenskaya is an actress in the truest sense of the word. The baroness she plays in "Dodsworth" [sic] may appear in only one scene and then for a very few minutes, but when she does appear she brings with her a sense of continuity; of having existed before she is seen and of continuing to exist after she has made her exit. Not only as a teacher but as actress she has much to give, and among the

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> most instructive lessons she can possibly offer to any one is one of her own performances.37

Group Theatre member and film star Franchot Tone adds his commendations when he says, "I admire Madame Ouspenskaya and I have profited greatly from her teachings."[38] Finally, Alexander Kirkland, another member of the Group Theatre states, "Most good actors struggle through years of trial and error to arrive at the principles which Madame Ouspenskaya so clearly sets forth."[39]

Other well-known pupils may have included film stars Frances Farmer, Margo, Joan Crawford, and Katharine Hepburn, but learning the names of her former students is difficult because Ouspenskaya refused to reveal them to the press.[40] A reporter of the time explains: "Many of her pupils are noted actors and directors but she will not 'name names,' believing success to be of no greater intrinsic value than lack of it."[41]

Evidence shows that Mildred Dunnock, Ruth White, and Anne Baxter studied with Ouspenskaya during the 1930's.[42] Like most of the approximately seventy students who studied with Ouspenskaya each year, they were young, and they planned to pursue careers in acting. Many students already possessed professional experience.

Anne Baxter worked with Ouspenskaya from 1936-1940 and eventually became a film star, but she was only thirteen when she began her studies, and she frequently

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disagreed with her teacher. The conflict probably frustrated Ouspenskaya, who usually refused to accept students under the age of sixteen, even though mothers often tried to persuade the actress to do otherwise.[43] Wary of the motives of such parents and mindful of a child's natural talents, Ouspenskaya also recognized the danger of pushing a child into serious performance training before he or she is physically and emotionally ready to handle it, particularly vocal training. "I never accept children as pupils for so-called professional purposes," she once explained. "A child is a better actor and singer, anyhow, than a grown-up, artificial person."[44]

Young adults with the proper attitude and sufficient means had little trouble gaining admission into the Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts. However, acceptance was just a beginning, and a student had to prove his worth if he wanted to stay. During the mid-1930's, Ouspenskaya talked to a reporter about her expectations:

> "When a pupil comes to me, I give him a trial period," she said, "and if God has given him that spark, he may go on. Otherwise it is better that he marry or learn typewriting. I have learned typewriting and it is very valuable."
>
> "It sometimes happens that the most brilliant at the start does not progress, while a dull student, like the Ugly Duckling, expresses a fire quite unexpected. Beauty does not mean a great deal; background and inner qualities count."45

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If a student hadn't earned Ouspenskaya's approval after a few weeks of classes, he was given a refund and asked to leave.

Although teaching required much of her time from October through May, Ouspenskaya sometimes engaged in community service activities. For example, she once appeared as guest of honor at a November conference of the Westchester Drama Association in White Plains, New York, where she spoke of "the amateur stage from the standpoint of acting and directing."[46] At another time, she judged a spring play competition, wherein the Guild Center Players of the New York Guild for the Jewish Blind competed against the members of Hartley House and the Navy Yard Boys' Club for the Jacob Riis Memorial cup.[47] No doubt she made other public appearances to promote her craft whenever time allowed.

During summers, Ouspenskaya maintained an active schedule, performing or teaching. From July 27th through August 1st in 1931, she reprised the role of the grandmother in a production of The Romantic Lady with the Jitney Players in Madison, Connecticut.[48] During the summer of 1933, Ouspenskaya conducted a dramatics workshop for the first time at the Red Mill in Bridgewater, Connecticut, the country home of Richard and Natasha Boleslavsky.[49] An unidentified correspondent described a presentation given by workshop participants at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Frank Peterson. The presentation included

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comic scenes from George Bernard Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra, Noel Coward's Sirocco, and O'Henry's The Whirligig, based on his short story. Daykarhanova assisted with direction. Ouspenskaya may have conducted another dramatics workshop at Brewster, New York sometime that same summer.[50] An article in June from the Peterborough Transcript shows that she moved her teaching activities to a venue in that New Hampshire community for the summer of 1936.[51] In addition to mentioning the opening of the season's first show, Chodorov's Kind Lady, the article states that it was Ouspenskaya's first year to supervise production and instruct an apprentice group of the Peterborough Players. Several students from the Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts participated, including Mary Harris, Richard Gaines, Ardis Ankerson, Barry Wandless, Bert Jeter, Gertrude Sandt, and Elizabeth Kidwell.

Concurrent with her active teaching schedule and her related activities in the community, Ouspenskaya also pursued her career as actress. Throughout the 1930's, she appeared on the Broadway stage and in Hollywood films. Ouspenskaya's first Broadway undertaking during the decade was her performance as the Fraulein in a production of The Passing Present, which opened at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on 7 December 1931 under the direction of Arthur Hopkins.[52] Written by Gretchen Damrosch, the play chronicles the disintegration of a proud New York family

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after an ambitious son embezzles money for a questionable business deal. The man's sister tries to help by borrowing money from a cousin's husband who loves her, but her actions prompt sordid revelations that cause greater damage. In the end, the family patriarch manages the situation by selling his home, although his decision leads to the family's dispersal. New York Times critic Brooks Atkinson compared the play to Anton Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard, another tale of fallen aristocracy, but The Passing Present was "loquacious and generally literal" and lacking in the "subtlety" of Chekhov. He added, the play "is so casually written, all in wellbred monotone, that you have very little sense of the crisis that underlies it."[53] Ouspenskaya, who played an elderly family retainer, received one of Atkinson's few positive comments about the show: "After all these years, there is Madame Ouspenskaya back on the stage to remind us, in the part of an old governess, of what an excellent actress she is."[54] The play closed after a brief run.

Ouspenskaya's next Broadway appearance had a greater impact upon her career. In 1934, she originated the role of Baroness von Obersdorf in Dodsworth, Sidney Howard's adaptation of a Sinclair Lewis novel. A critical and popular success, Dodsworth ran for over a hundred performances.[55] In 1936, it was made into a film.

The New York production of Dodsworth opened on 24 February 1934 at the Shubert Theatre, with Robert Sinclair

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as director and Walter Huston and Fay Bainter in the leading roles of Samuel and Fran Dodsworth.[56] In the play's plot, Sam Dodsworth, who has just retired from his job as an automoblile manufacturer, takes his frivolous wife, Fran, to Europe. In Europe, Fran pursues affairs with several romantically inclined suitors, much to the dismay of her husband. However, Sam finally finds happiness after he meets and falls in love with a sensible American widow, Edith Cartright. At the end, he decides to leave Fran.

Ouspenskaya played Baroness von Obersdorf, the disapproving mother of one of Fran's suitors. In an attempt to preserve her aristocratic family line, the Baroness refuses to grant her titled son permission to marry Fran. Brooks Atkinson noted, "Maria Ouspenskaya makes one of her rare and memorable appearances as a German countess. Although the scene is brief, the gifted actress burns it into the memory with the flame of her extraordinary artistry."[57] John Mason Brown voices similar praise in the New York Evening Post: "Thanks also are due to Mme. Ouspenskaya for her unforgettable bit as the proudly impassive baroness."[58] Stark Young of the New Republic claims she gave a "performance of genius."[59] Another favorable review came from Stage Magazine:

> Maria Ouspenskaya, the Frau von Obersdorf of Dodsworth, does a bit which is one of the memorable things of the season. This former member of the Moscow Art Theatre utilizes all the resources of the actor's craft to turn the

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> climax of the play in the five minutes which are allotted her by the author.60

How did Ouspenskaya create such a strong impression with such a small part? An unidentified writer, whose words echo a quote by John Mason Brown mentioned earlier, offers an explanation:

> The reason for this is, I suspect, that Ouspenskaya does not work in the superficial manner of Broadway. The baroness she plays may appear in only one scene and then for a very few minutes, but when she does appear she brings with her a sense of continuity; of having existed before she is seen and of continuing to exist long after she has made her exit.61

Ouspenskaya followed her success in Dodsworth with an appearance in Abide With Me in 1935. But the gloomy psychological melodrama by Clare Boothe Brokaw lacked the appeal of Ouspenskaya's previous Broadway vehicle, and the production, which opened on 21 November 1935, closed after a run of about two weeks.[62] Brooks Atkinson panned the show, calling it "a gratuitous horror play about an abnormal family jar," and he suggests that its characters lacked "any dramatic, intellectual, or social significance."[63]

Abide With Me tells the story of Arthur Marsden, a sadistic alcoholic, who had suffered abuse from his father. In the play, Marsden continues the cycle of violence by abusing his wife, Nan. Nan endures the abuse because she adores Arthur's frail and saintly mother, who is under her care. Nevertheless, Nan finally succumbs to the attention of a man who loves her, Dr. Craig, and

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has an affair. In a melodramatic twist of fate, she becomes pregnant with her lover's child, but Arthur refuses to grant a divorce. He looks forward to punishing Nan by tormenting the child. When all seems lost for Nan, the family servant steps in and impulsively shoots Arthur. Because they view the murder as an act of kindness, Nan and the others in the house conspire to make the crime look like a suicide.

Ouspenskaya played the servant who shot Arthur. Even though Atkinson disliked almost everything else about the play, he gave Ouspenskaya and Cecilia Loftus, who played Arthur's mother, positive credit for their performances: "In the last scene, after the murder, Mme. Ouspenskaya and Miss Loftus play their parts with so much stifled anguish that the curtain falls on the one pure evocation of the evening."[64]

Ouspenskaya had little time to dwell on the failure of Abide With Me. In 1936, producer Samuel Goldwyn summoned her to Hollywood to reprise her role as Baroness von Obersdorf in a film version of Dodsworth. Ouspenskaya had refused previous offers of film contracts because she didn't want to be separated from her pupils, and she offered Goldwyn certain conditions for her appearance in his film. A Hollywood reporter of the day describes what happened after Goldwyn sent his initial wire:

> Madame replied that she knew nothing of motion picture technique, but since she had created the role of the baroness in the stage version,

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> she wanted permission to handle the characterization according to her own interpretation.
>
> This combination of humility and self-confidence had the desired effect. Mr. Goldwyn telephoned to say he could ask for nothing more. William Wyler, director of the film, wired hasty reassurances. "You were superb in the play. As far as I am concerned you may do anything you wish with the part. Bring your own clothes, if you like."65

The acquiescence of both Goldwyn and Wyler with regard to creative control, along with their assent to film her part in a short number of days, convinced Ouspenskaya to join the project.

Ouspenskaya travelled to Hollywood in June of 1936. She stayed for about a week, so that she might have time to rejoin the Peterborough Players for the completion of their summer season. The Hollywood press gave the Russian stage actress considerable attention, creating an exotic public persona for the actress that would follow her throughout the remainder of her career. Reporters often mentioned Ouspenskaya's eccentricities, such as her habit of wearing a monocle and carrying a cane, as well as her practice of dressing in black and using a long cigarette holder.[66] During her early visits to Hollywood, reporters also made light of the innocence she displayed as an apparent novice in the world of the movies.[67] One recalls an incident where Ouspenskaya grew fearful when she saw an image of herself walk past her dressing room door: "'Now what have I done?' she wailed to her manager. 'Go quickly, like a good boy, and see

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why they have fired me.'" Others reassured Ouspenskaya that her doppelganger was just a stand-in, but she then asked, puzzled, "But what is a stand-in?"[68] Another reporter wrote that Ouspenskaya came off the set after her first day's shooting and said that she felt like a student:

> This was her first movie; she missed the audience out front; there was no response, she observed, to be gotten out of the camera lens and "that thing hanging"--the microphone. But she didn't mind doing a scene over and over; in the Moscow Art Theater, she added archly, they rehearsed everything for at least three months. Later, after she had seen and heard herself in the rushes, she would know whether to economize or enlarge on her playing.69

Ouspenskaya was joined on the Dodsworth set by Walter Huston, who again played Samuel Dodsworth, and Ruth Chatterton, who replaced Fay Bainter in the role of Fran. Ouspenskaya's only mishap in filming was a minor injury to her eye; she had replaced her monocle with a contact lens, but the bright lights heated the glass, scorching her optic nerve.[70] Nevertheless, Ouspenskaya apparently enjoyed her experience in the studio. She expressed her feelings to a reporter at the time:

> "I think there is not much difference between the theater and pictures," she said with her fascinating Russian accent. "I missed the audience, of course, but it seems to me the technique of the stage does very well for the screen, too. Once you have learned the differences in distance and lighting, you have mastered all. I would even say that pictures have more possibilities than the stage because of their fine nuances, their condensing so much into so little."71

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Ouspenskaya also explained that her experience of having played the same role onstage made her film job easier, as did the helpful attitude of her colleagues on the set.

Dodsworth opened at theatres in September of 1936 to glowing reviews.[72] Along with the rest of the cast, Ouspenskaya received her fair share of good press. In his review for the New York Times, Frank Nugent acknowledged the excellence of her acting.[73] The reviewer for Variety wrote, "Mme. Ouspenskaya is magnificently and artfully simple in impersonating the Baroness von Obersdorf--a superb piece of acting in which she seems to step straight out of the peerage for one of the finest scenes in the picture, every foot of it carried by the reading of her lines."[74]

Although she was besieged by offers for other film roles after her work in Dodsworth, Ouspenskaya maintained an allegiance to the stage. During the fall of 1936, she appeared on Broadway in Robert Turney's The Daughters of Atreus. The play, which opened on 14 October 1936 at the 44th Street Theatre, told anew the legend of Agamemnon with a plot that chronicled the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the travails of Elektra, and the murder of Klytaimnestra by Orestes [Names are spelled as they appear in the play].[75]

Ouspenskaya played Polymnia, Klytaimnestra's nurse. In the course of the play Polymnia reveals that she had been a princess and a mother until Atreus conquered her

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city and brought her back home with him to serve his family. The tale of Polymnia's struggle to overcome suffering gives Klytaimnestra comfort when she experiences problems of her own. Eleanora Mendelssohn, a heavily accented German actress, known for her work with Max Reinhardt, played Klytaimnestra, and American actress Joanna Roos played Elektra.

Plagued by actors with competing accents and differing styles, the production received mixed reviews.[76] Burns Mantle of the New York Daily News relates that Ouspenskaya's performance stirred the audience to applause.[77] Richard Watts, Jr. noted in the New York Tribune: "That splendid veteran, Maria Ouspenskaya, is enormously moving as the loyal and philosophical old nurse, Polymnia, but her Russian accent sometimes makes her difficult to understand."[78] Another reporter also voiced mixed feelings in a review for the New York Sun: "Maria gives an admirable and quiet performance as Polymnia, an old nurse, but it is a little lost in all this fury."[79] A writer for the New York Post includes Ouspenskaya in one of the more scathing reviews of the overall production:

> But when you combine Madame Ouspenskaya's naturalism and accent fully with Miss Mendelssohn's German heroics and accent, and then mix the two of them up with a company of ill-assorted Americans trying to be ancient Greeks, you turn the House of Atreus into International House, if not a production in a foreign language.80

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Finally, John Anderson of the New York Evening Journal provides the most negative criticism with regard to Ouspenskaya's individual performance:

> I cannot remember ever feeling that Ouspenskaya was giving a bad performance in the many times I have seen her since she came years ago with the Moscow Art Theatre, and remained a happy hostage on our shores. But her present performance simply has nothing to do with the script. It is out of scale and out of line. It is in miniature when it should be larger. The difference in proportion damages what should be a scene of majestic freight.81

Given such problems, the show closed after an abbreviated run.

Acting in plays at the same time that she maintained a full teaching schedule proved an arduous task for Ouspenskaya. About the time she appeared in The Daughters of Atreus, she spoke of her schedule in an interview:

> "I go to my school at 9:30 for the day," she said. "Then I go to the theatre for my performance. Afterwards, I am rather exhausted, but since I can sleep only a little I pass the rest of the night reading."82

Her reading consisted mostly of manuscripts and fan magazines. In the same interview, Ouspenskaya also expressed her desire to do a comedienne's role in a musical, something she would never be granted the chance to do.

The closing of The Daughters of Atreus gave Ouspenskaya a brief chance to rest, but another matter soon fixed her attention. On 7 February 1937, she was nominated to receive an Academy Award for her performance

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as the Baroness in the film version of Dodsworth.[83] In what was the first year for the presentation of a Best Supporting Actress award, Ouspenskaya competed against Gale Sondegaard in Anthony Adverse, Beulah Bondi in The Gorgeous Hussy, Alice Brady in My Man Godfrey, and Bonita Granville in These Three.[84] Although she was a favorite to win, she lost to Gale Sondegaard. Ouspenskaya most likely attended the awards ceremony that was held at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles on 4 March 1937.

Weeks before Ouspenskaya knew about her Academy Award nomination for Dodsworth, she had already begun work on a second film. In January of 1937, she travelled back to Hollywood to film costume tests for the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production of Conquest.[85] The screenplay, written by Samuel Hoffenstein, Salka Viertel and S. N. Behrman, was based upon the true story of the lengthy love affair between Napoleon and a Polish countess named Marie Walewska. The film starred Charles Boyer and Greta Garbo, and Ouspenskaya played the role of Countess Pelagia, a crazed old lady who accuses the Emperor of cheating at cards in one of the movie's more comic scenes.[86]

Ouspenskaya began shooting her scenes for Conquest in March, and she was dismissed in June. She may have stayed in Hollywood for the duration of the summer after the picture's completion.[87] In interviews, she praised the film's stars and its director, Clarence Brown. "Boyer's Napoleon is a perfectly rounded, sensitive,

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magnificent performance, and as for Garbo--when God gave his gifts he simply did not know where to stop with her," she told one reporter. To the same reporter, she spoke of Clarence Brown: "I was immediately impressed with his sincerity, his great understanding, his skill as an artist."[88] Ouspenskaya revealed more about her colleagues to a second reporter. "I found Miss Garbo very easy to work with," said Ouspenskaya. "She is friendly and has irresistible charm. She was born with so much that cannot be learned."[89] Boyer, according to Ouspenskaya, was also a consummate artist, easy in his relations to others, but absorbed at all times in his character.

Conquest opened in October of 1937 to lukewarm reviews. The cost of filming the picture received almost as much notice as the acting or the story; MGM spent nearly four million dollars on the production, making Conquest one of the most expensive films of its time.[90] Mention of Ouspenskaya's brief performance almost gets buried in the flurry about finances, but her card-playing scene is described as "brilliantly played" by one reviewer and "charming" by another.[91]

Ouspenskaya put aside her film career for almost a year after the opening of Conquest. She returned to Hollywood, probably during the latter part of 1938, to play the role of the Mme. Marnay in the RKO production of Love Affair.[92] Such was the success of Love Affair that it was remade in 1957 as An Affair to Remember, with

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Catherine Nesbitt playing the role that Ouspenskaya originated.[93] A second remake, also titled Love Affair, was released in 1994 with Katharine Hepburn playing the Ouspenskaya role.[94]

The original version of Love Affair opened in March of 1939 to warm reviews.[95] Critics were charmed by the production that was directed by Leo McCarey and based on an original story by McCarey and Mildred Cram. Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne played the leads, Michel Marnay and Terry MacKay, two somewhat jaded adults who fall in love aboard a ship travelling from Naples to New York. They agree to give themselves six months apart in which to see if their relationship is temporary infatuation or enduring love. At the end of the waiting period, both realize that their love for each other has endured, but the crisis comes when Terry is crippled in an accident on her way to meet Michel to tell him of her decision. Fearing that Michel couldn't love a woman with a handicap, Terry lets Michel believe that she has rejected his love. Fortunately, fate finally intervenes to bring the two lovers together again, and all ends happily.

Ouspenskaya played Michel's dying grandmother, the seventy-seven year old widow of a diplomat, who welcomes Michel and Terry into her home during a stopover of the ship during the early part of the movie. Mme. Marnay recognizes the potential of the relationship between her grandson and Terry, and she encourages the romance. A

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highlight of the visit is a moment when Mme. Marnay plays a romantic tune for the couple on her piano. Soon after she completed filming, Ouspenskaya spoke of her preparation for that scene:

> A piano teacher came to teach me something about music. The last time I played the piano I was perhaps twenty years old, and here I am fifty-one. They were going to have somebody else do the actual playing, but finally I did it myself and they were surprised.96

The role also required Ouspenskaya to speak French, but Ouspenskaya could already do so, as she had studied French and Spanish in her youth.[97] She filmed her part in seven consecutive days, so that she might return to teaching in New York.

Once again Ouspenskaya received positive reviews. Howard Barnes spoke of her giving a "brilliant minor impersonation" in the Herald Tribune, and Frank S. Nugent acknowledged her "effective" contribution in the New York Times.[98] In a similar vein, the reviewer for Variety noted that "Maria Ouspenskaya provides a warmly sympathetic portrayal as Boyer's grandmother in Madeira."[99] Choosing a more effusive stance, the reviewer for the New York Post raved:

> But if Dunne is less than perfect, there is ample compensation in the brief and glorious performance of Maria Ouspenskaya as Boyer's grandmother. This role is so brilliantly paced and projected that it will be remembered when parts ten or twenty times as big have long been forgotten. It takes acting of that rare sort to remind us that what we see most of the time is mere pretense and showy blustering. Ouspenskaya is so real it hurts.100

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Ouspenskaya's colleagues in the motion picture industry apparently agreed with the Post assessment of her work in Love Affair, because they again nominated her for an Academy Award in the winter of the following year.

At the same time that she enjoyed the successful opening of Love Affair, Ouspenskaya started work on one of the most challenging roles of her film career, the Maharani in the 20th Century Fox production of The Rains Came. Filming did not begin until April of 1939, and Ouspenskaya spent much advance time preparing to play the wife of the sovereign of Ranchipur in the movie based on Louis Bromfield's novel of India, The Rains Came.[101] For example, she stayed a week in the home of the Grand Duchess Marie, an authority on India, learning to walk in bare feet, to eat with her hands, and the correct manner of dress.[102] She also spent numerous hours visiting the Hindu section of New York where she paid musicians, shoptenders, and others to coach her in Indian mannerisms.

When Ouspenskaya finally reached the set in Hollywood, she was able to recognize and correct an error in her costume. She also demanded authenticity in other areas, particularly that she should be allowed to walk barefoot, as was the tradition and privilege of Maharanees. The director, Clarence Brown, balked at letting her do so, claiming that Ouspenskaya's feet couldn't be seen beneath her long robes and reminding her of the danger of nails

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on the set, but the actress refused to compromise. A reporter recalls the scene:

> Madame held out a tiny foot, jeweled in the correct manner, anklets clinking; she twirled it speculatively, and said in a firm voice, "There should not be any nails there." That was final, and she played the scene barefoot.103

But when the The Rains Came opened in September of 1939, reviews were decidely mixed, even though the cast featured veteran stars Myrna Loy and Tyrone Power. Some reviewers praised the film's use of spectacle, while others criticized the film's producers for downplaying Bromfield's social commentary about racism and imperialism in India in order to spotlight the story's elements of romance. In the Hollywood version of the story, the plot centers around a love story in which sophisticated Lady Esketh, Loy's character, finds new meaning in life when she falls in love with Power's character, an Indian surgeon named Major Safti. However, natural disasters such as an earthquake, a plague, and a flood hinder the relationship to a greater extent than racial prejudices, and disease finally brings the romance to its melodramatic end.

The movie revealed crowd-pleasing special effects, for which The Rains Came would win an Academy Award, but critics disagreed about the effectiveness of individual performances. Ouspenskaya, for example, received mixed reviews. Frank Nugent of the New York Times, who objected to the film's emphasis on romance, states that "Maria Ouspenskaya's portrayal of the Maharani is admirable,

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but the portrait isn't."[104] The reviewer for Variety enjoyed the film as a whole, but had less positive feelings about Ouspenskaya's performance: "Maria Ouspenskaya, as the Maharini, makes her choice outstanding, although never quite clinching the part. It calls for all the tragic earnestness with which the Russe character actress endows the assignment, yet she never quite jells physiologically, with the role."[105] On the other hand, Harrison Carroll, who reviewed the film's premiere on 14 September 1939 at Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, had only good things to say about the movie and Ouspenskaya: "The most perfect characterization of the lot is that of Maria Ouspenskaya, as the old maharanee. She dominates every scene in which she appears."[106]

During the summer and fall of 1939, Ouspenskaya moved both herself and her school to Hollywood. In New York, the actress had found success on Broadway at the same time that she had broadened and solidified her reputation as one of America's most respected acting teachers. However, the lure of Hollywood proved too strong to resist. The financial and professional rewards of making movies couldn't be ignored, so Ouspenskaya, who had already acted in four films, chose to pursue new challenges on the West Coast. The move to Hollywood signified the beginning of the final and most successful phase of Ouspenskaya's professional life.

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NOTES--CHAPTER 6

[1] The Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts, brochures from the 1933-1934 season, the 1934-1935 season, the 1937-1938 season, and the 1938-1939 season, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[2] Much of the information about Ouspenskaya's New York school comes from materials that are a part of the Ouspenskaya clipping file at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. The collection contains a flier for the 1932-1933 season that lists dates, fees, and general class information. The collection also possesses brochures for four seasons: 1933-1934, 1934-1935, 1937-1938, and 1938-1939. Brochures list dates, fees, and general class information, as well as descriptions of specific classes and short biographies of individual instructors.

[3] Maria Ouspenskaya, "Marie Ouspensky," ts., Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA, 3.

[4] Program for Millbrook Theatre, 1930, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[5] Unidentified ts., 22 April 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. This is a brief biographical sketch of Ouspenskaya's life and career up to 1939, probably written for publicity purposes.

[6] Christine Edwards, The Stanislavsky Heritage (New York: New York University Press, 1965) 241.

[7] The Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts, brochure from the 1938-1939 season, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center; The Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts, brochure from the 1940-1941 season, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. The brochure for 1938-1939 states that Ouspenskaya had been teaching for "the last ten years at her own School of Dramatic Arts," suggesting a 1928 starting date. The brochure for 1940-1941 advertises the school's "twelfth season," indicating a 1929 date of formation. Since Ouspenskaya was still teaching at the Lab prior to 1930, neither date is probably correct, unless each brochure refers to dates when

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Ouspenskaya started giving private lessons outside the Lab.

[8] Unidentified ts., 22 April 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[9] Unidentified ts., 22 April 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[10] See brochures from The Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts.

[11] Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts, flier for the 1932-1933 season, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[12] Most biographical information on specific instructors is derived from brochures from the following seasons: 1933-1934, 1934-1935, 1937-1938, and 1938-1939. Since brochures aren't available for at least three seasons, the listing of instructors is incomplete.

[13] Brochures for the 1933-1934 season and the 1934-1935 season contain information on Daykarhanova. Other information comes from a short biographical listing: Notable Names in the American Theatre (Clifton, New Jersey: James T. White and Company, 1976).

[14] Brochures for the 1933-1934 season and the 1934-1935 season contain information on the Actor's Group.

[15] Program for recital of the Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts, 24 Feb. 1935, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[16] Unidentified clipping, 7 Sept. 1933, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[17] Notable Names in the American Theatre (Clifton, New Jersey: James T. White and Company, 1976) 669.

[18] Foster Hirsch, A Method to Their Madness: The History of the Actor's Studio (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1984) 62.

[19] Brochures for the 1933-1934 season, the 1934-1935 season, the 1937-1938 season, and the 1938-1939 season.

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[20] Brochure for the 1933-1934 season.

[21] Brochure for the 1934-1935 season.

[22] Brochure for the 1934-1935 season.

[23] Brochure for the 1938-1939 season.

[24] Brochure for the 1937-1938 season.

[25] Brochure for the 1933-1934 season.

[26] Information on Emmanuel Reicher (1849-1924) is derived from Cambridge Guide to Theatre, ed. Martin Banham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[27] Brochure for the 1937-1938 season.

[28] Brochure for the 1938-1939 season.

[29] Brochure for the 1933-1934 season.

[30] Brochure for the 1937-1938 season.

[31] Brochure for the 1937-1938 season.

[32] Brochure for the 1938-1939 season.

[33] Unidentified clipping, c. 1935, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[34] Henry Sutherland, "Maria Ouspenskaya Is on Her Way East with Her Monocle and Cane," Portland Press Herald 24 June 1936.

[35] Brochure for the 1938-1939 season.

[36] Brochure for the 1938-1939 season.

[37] Brochure for the 1938-1939 season.

[38] Brochure for the 1938-1939 season.

[39] Brochure for the 1938-1939 season.

[40] Sutherland, "Maria Ouspenskaya Is on Her Way East with Her Cane and Monocle."

[41] Marguerite Tazelaar, "She Saw Her Stand-In Go By, and Thought She'd Been Fired," c. 1936, unidentified clipping, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection,

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New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[42] Program for recital of the Maria Ouspenskaya School of Dramatic Arts, 24 February 1936, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center; Notable Women in the American Theatre, eds. Alice M. Robinson, Vera Mowry Roberts, and Milly S. Barranger (New York; Westport, Connecticut; and London: Greenwood Press, 1989) 920-921; Karin J. Fowler, Anne Baxter: A Bio-Bibliography (New York; Westport, Connecticut; and London: Greenwood Press, 1991) 2.

[43] Robert W. Dana, "From Forty Words of English to an Authority on Its Diction," unidentified clipping, c. 1939, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[44] Maria Ouspenskaya, "My Reminiscences and Observations," ts., c. 1945, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[45] Tazelaar, "She Saw Her Stand-In Go By."

[46] "Mme. Ouspenskaya, Guest," unidentified clipping, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[47] "Actors of Guild for Blind Win Drama Tournament," Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[48] Program for Jitney Players, Week of 27 July 1931 through 1 August 1931, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[49] Unidentified clipping, 7 Sept. 1933, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[50] New York Evening Post 14 Oct. 1933.

[51] The Peterborough Transcript 25 June 1936.

[52] The Encyclopedia of the New York Stage, 1930-1940, ed. Samuel L. Leiter (New York; Westport, Connecticut; and London: Greenwood Press, 1989) 364.

[53] New York Times 8 Dec. 1931.

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[54] New York Times 8 Dec. 1931.

[55] The Encyclopedia of the New York Stage, 1930-1940 190.

[56] New York Times 26 Feb. 1934.

[57] New York Times 26 Feb. 1934.

[58] New York Evening Post 26 Feb. 1934.

[59] The New Republic 31 Oct. 1934.

[60] Stage Magazine 1934.

[61] "Maria Ouspenskaya as an Actress--The Baroness Plays in Dodsworth and Her Past Performances," unidentified clipping, c. 1936, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[62] The Encyclopedia of American Theatre, 1900-1975, ed. Edwin Bronner (San Diego and New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1980) 11; The Encyclopedia of the New York Stage, 1930-1940 5.

[63] New York Times 22 Nov. 1935.

[64] New York Times 22 Nov. 1935.

[65] "Gets Freedom in Dodsworth," unidentified clipping, c. 1936, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[66] Dana, "From Forty Words in English to an Authority on Its Diction."

[67] Ouspenskaya claimed that Dodsworth was her first movie. However, she may have appeared in silent films while still in Russia; several MAT actors found extra work in early movies of the day even though Stanislavsky disapproved of the medium, according to J. W. Roberts in Richard Boleslavsky: His Life and Work in the Theatre (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981) 52. Ouspenskaya's name is associated with the 1917 movie The Flowers Are Late in a book about Russian film: Jay Leyda, Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film, 3rd ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983) 422.

[68] Tazelaar, "She Saw Her Stand-In Go By."

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[69] Philip K. Scheuer, "Hollywood," Los Angeles Times 21 June 1936.

[70] Los Angeles Examiner 22 July 1936: Los Angeles Times 9 August 1936.

[71] Tazelaar, "She Saw Her Stand-In Go By."

[72] The Maria Ouspenskaya Collection at UCLA contains reviews of Dodworth from several papers.

[73] New York Times 24 Sept. 1936.

[74] Variety 16 Sept. 1936.

[75] The Encylopedia of American Theatre, 1900-1975 119.

[76] The Maria Ouspenskaya Collection at UCLA contains reviews of The Daughters of Atreus from several papers.

[77] New York Daily News 15 Oct. 1936.

[78] New York Tribune 15 Oct. 1936.

[79] New York Sun 15 Oct. 1936.

[80] New York Post 15 Oct. 1936.

[81] New York Evening Journal 15 Oct. 1936.

[82] Tazelaar, "She Saw Her Stand-In Go By."

[83] Academy Awards, 2nd ed., compiler Richard Shale (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing, 1982) 320.

[84] Variety Presents: The Complete Book of Major U.S. Show Business Awards (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1985) 8.

[85] Marguerite Tazelaar, "Madame Ouspenskaya Reports on the Situation in Hollywood," New York Herald Tribune c. November 1937, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[86] New York Times 5 Nov. 1937; Variety 27 Oct. 1937.

[87] Los Angeles Examiner 4 August 1939. This article mentions a birthday party held for Ouspenskaya at her Hermosa Beach home that was attended by her manager Bob Abbott. It also speaks of Ouspenskaya's love of Hollywood Bowl concerts.

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[88] Regina Crewe, "Ouspenskaya Art Stand Out in Film," New York Journal-American 29 Oct. 1937.

[89] Tazelaar, "Madame Ouspenskaya Reports on the Situation in Hollywood."

[90] New York Times 5 Nov. 1937.

[91] New York Times 5 Nov. 1937; Variety 27 Oct. 1937.

[92] Sides from screeplay of Conquest, 20 Oct. 1938, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[93] Homer Dickens, "Maria Ouspenskaya," Screen Facts vol. 1, no. 4 (1963). Dickens' article provides short descriptions of each of Ouspenskaya's films, as well as a list of directors, casts, and studios.

[94] Leonard Maltin's 1996 Movie and Video Guide, ed. Leonard Maltin (New York: Penguin Books, 1995) 783.

[95] The Maria Ouspenskaya Collection at UCLA contains reviews of Love Affair from several papers.

[96] Dana, "From Forty Words in English to an Authority on Diction."

[97] Jerry Asher, "How Ugly Ducklings Can Find Happiness," Sreenland April 1941, 80.

[98] New York Herald-Tribune 17 March 1939; New York Times 17 March 1939.

[99] Variety 15 March 1939.

[100] New York Post 17 March 1939.

[101] Call slips for The Rains Came, April 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[102] Mary Elizabeth Lews, "Maria Ouspenskaya," unidentified clipping, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[103] Rosalind Shaffer, "Young in Spirit, If Not Years," Boston Post 1 Jan. 1940.

[104] New York Times 9 Sept. 1939.

[105] Variety 13 Sept. 1939.

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[106] Harrison Carroll, "Preview Audience Awed by Special Effects," unidentified clipping, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

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CHAPTER 7. THE FORTIES: THE HOLLYWOOD SCHOOL AND THE MOVIES

> Madame Maria Ouspenskaya is happy to announce to her many friends and students the realization of an ambition of longstanding, the transfer of her school this summer from New York City to its new quarters in Hollywood, California.1

Thus begins an advertisement announcing the 1939-1940 season of Maria Ouspenskaya's school for acting, newly named the Maria Ouspenskaya Private Studios of Dramatic Art. Although her school had flourished in New York during the 1930's, attracting some of the nation's top acting talent, Ouspenskaya felt compelled to make a change of venue after a steady stream of film roles during the latter part of the decade required her to make increasingly frequent visits to the West Coast. She made a permanent move to Hollywood during the summer of 1939, thereby beginning the final phase of her acting and teaching careers.

Ouspenskaya first announced her decision to move in May of 1939.[2] Thereafter, she provided reasons for her choice in several publications, including a guest column for Hedda Hopper, the duenna of Hollywood gossip. For Hopper's readers, she writes the following: "Within the last two years, I believe Hollywood has become the art center of the whole country. Before, Hollywood went to Broadway to select the best of materials. Now Broadway comes to Hollywood." She then added, "I feel too, it

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is injustice to my pupils, to teach in New York and act in Hollywood. To be with mind and soul in two places is very difficult."[3]

The aforementioned advertisement for the school lists advantages of Hollywood over New York.[4] For example, it cost less to live and work in Hollywood than in New York, thus allowing low operating expenses and reasonable tuitions. In addition, new and larger facilities were readily available in Hollywood, specifically a site with adequate classroom space, a large private swimming pool, and open outdoor relaxation areas. Finally, Hollywood provided more opportunities for professional acting work than New York, for both Ouspenskaya and her students. In other publications, Ouspenskaya also named California's more moderate weather as a deciding factor in the move.[5]

Ouspenskaya promised to maintain a talented staff at her California school, which was located at 2027 North Vine Street in Hollywood.[6] To assist, Donald May moved from New York to continue as the school's general manager. Other staff members included three experienced instructors from the New York school: Alexander Koiransky, Mary Harris, and Margaret Prendergast McLean. They were joined by two new teachers who also possessed well-regarded professional reputations, Adolph Bolm and Fred Orin Harris. Robert Haig, Majorie Silvester, and Clement Brace eventually worked as Ouspenskaya's teaching assistants.

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Bolm taught ballet and a class in rhythmic physical control.[7] Skilled as a dancer, choreographer, and ballet master, he had gained international fame for his work as a dancer with Petrograd's Imperial Ballet. In addition, Bolm had worked often with Anna Pavlova, dancing with her in Diaghilev's Ballet Russes. His participation as a teacher at Ouspenskaya's Hollywood school gave the venture added prestige. By the winter of 1941, however, a teacher named Virginia Hall Johnson, who was well-known as a choreographer and concert artist, apparently replaced Bolm.[8]

Fred Orin Harris joined the staff as an assistant director for the performance classes taught by Alexander Koiransky.[9] Harris had previously directed for the Portland Civic Theatre and the Peterborough Players of Peterborough, New Hampshire. After his brief tenure at the Maria Ouspenskaya Private Studios of Dramatic Arts, he and his wife, Mary Blaisdell Harris, would eventually bring Ouspenskaya's teachings to scores of students at the University of California at Berkley, where Fred Harris taught until 1968.[10]

The general course of study at Ouspenskaya's Hollywood school differed little from that of the school in New York.[11] Classes in diction, ballet, rhythmic physical control, and voice production complemented Ouspenskaya's class in the technique of acting. In addition, the school offered lessons in sketching, as well as a special class

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in makeup taught by Sidney Cramer, a representative from Max Factor. Students visited television and movie sound stages, a costume company, and the Max Factor factory, and a course of classes offered during the optional second year of study gave students the opportunity to perform in full-length productions before outside audiences.

Ouspenskaya employed an assistant to interview prospective students in lieu of holding auditions. However, anyone accepted had to prove his worth. If a student showed no growth after a semester of study, Ouspenskaya refunded his money and sent him away.[12]

Age provided no impediment to acceptance, although Ouspenskaya still discouraged students under the age of sixteen, and most students ranged in age between eighteen and twenty-six years old. Classes featured an equal mix of men and women, but no minorities attended the school.[13] Nevertheless, nontraditional students, including mature women, were welcome to enroll. In a 1940 interview, Ouspenskaya encouraged certain older women to pursue a career in acting:

> I've had hundreds of letters from women over 60 years old. There was one woman who came to see me who is 76. Most of these women have been married; but married or not, if they are not that old, I say to them: "If you started life in the theatre and then married, it is never too late to return to the stage. But to start now--no, the road is too long."14

She expanded on her views for Variety a year later and explained that any woman with talent can become an actress:

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> Beauty is not necessary. Age means nothing. Talent is one thing that no one can add nor take out. Every actress must have it. To love to act is one thing; to be able to act is another.15

Ouspenskaya's unusual attitude, coupled with her own example, prompted a glamorous actress of the day to exclaim, "To me, Madame is the ideal of what an actress can be when she's old. I haven't worried about it so much lately since I've been watching her."[16]

Students who displayed sufficient talent entered a second-year program where they prepared roles in full-length plays under the direction of Alexander Koiransky. The plays were then presented in non-commerical venues such as local schools. The faculty discouraged students from participating in professional auditions until at least eighteen months of training had been completed and students could present a complete acting background to agents and producers.[17] However, the second year of the school's program featured a final presentation of the student productions for a specially invited audience of stage and film professionals.

Touring with the plays gave students valuable performance experience, and, at the same time, it provided local high schools, colleges, and universities with high-quality, low-cost entertainment and Ouspenskaya's school with recruitment opportunities.[18] The first tours occurred during the spring of 1940 when a group of students, most of whom had followed Ouspenskaya from New

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York, presented Charles Dickens' The Cricket on the Hearth and Carlo Goldoni's The Mistress of the Inn.[19] A second set of performances, which may or may not have toured, occurred during 1942 when students presented at least four different comedies at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre under the direction of Jan Ullrich.[20] These productions included Moss Hart and George Kaufman's George Washington Slept Here on January 30th, Dodie Smith's Dear Octopus on March 21st, George Kelly's The Torch Bearers on May 15th, and Sidney Howard's The Late Christopher Bean on November 24th.

School terms typically ran from September to mid-January in the fall and from the end of January through May in the spring. Ouspenskaya continued to offer private lessons to students who wanted to perfect specific roles for the stage or the screen. She worked at the school from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. five days a week and met with private students before classes or early on Sundays.[21] To stay fit enough to handle this schedule, Ouspenskaya usually began and ended her day with a swim.[22]

Nellie McCaslin, who gained professional reknown as a theatre professor at New York University and as the author of several books on creative drama for children, remembers Ouspenskaya's busy schedule well. She studied with the actress during a special summer session of the Hollywood school held in the early 1940's, and she describes her experiences in a 1994 letter.[23] She writes,

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"It was a full day, Monday through Friday - from 9:00 to 5:00 and sometimes rehearsing scenes at night - that with homework, of which there was a lot, meant we literally did nothing else."[24] McCaslin recalls that mealtime was respected, with at least an hour for lunch and an hour and a half for dinner. However, no food was allowed in the studio.

McCaslin's schedule of classes seemed to include the same studies offered during regular sessions, even though only two groups of fifteen students attended the school during the summer session while three or four groups might attend during the fall and spring. McCaslin's group met for a two-hour acting lab, followed by History of Theatre, lunch, stage voice and diction, movement, and, finally, makeup. She remembers voice class as the most rigorous of her classes: "Phonetics was the method by which we worked and although I had Phonetics before, it had never been used so extensively."[25]

Ouspenskaya's role in teaching extended beyond her class in the technique of acting. "Mme. taught the acting class with two assistants who actually helped her when there was a language problem or she needed the name of a pupil which she had momentarily forgotten," writes McCaslin. "She also moved from room to room all day observing our work in the other areas, particularly movement and dance."[26]

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Work in Ouspenskaya's acting class often involved improvisation, and McCaslin considers those studies an important influence on her later work with creative drama. Scene study was also a valuable element of the acting class. "She [Ouspenskaya] always worked from the inside out and for that reason, [we] did scene study to learn but not to perform for an audience," explains McCaslin. "She used to give us scenes on Friday to prepare for Monday and would say in her Russian accent, 'Please to do sins [scenes] over weekend, young ladies and young gentlemen.'"[27] McCaslin notes that Ouspenskaya maintained a sense of humor about her accent, and the actress jokingly told her students, "I may have a strong Russian accent, but I can speak my mother tongue, which none of you can do."[28]

McCaslin noted that the most impressive feature of Ouspenskaya's teaching was the actress's demand for sincerity and honesty. She had no tolerance for creation of stereotypes or superficial dramatic effects. "She stressed paying attention to what we were doing, not looking at her or trying to please," explains McCaslin. "I can still hear her say, 'Work from the inside - don't try to please me.'"[29] McCaslin also adds, "Her emphasis on honesty was nothing new, but her disapproval - almost attack on a dishonest performance made a lifelong impression and I am eternally grateful for that."[30]

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McCaslin notes that an old-world emphasis on respect and discipline often colored Ouspenskaya's teaching and the school as a whole. For example, Ouspenskaya demanded that her students follow a dress code: "Young ladies will be young ladies; young men will be young men. No slacks or pants on young ladies in my class. You will not be peasants."[31] The code also prohibited young women from wearing sandals, unless such footwear was necessary for a scene.

Ouspenskaya also expected a certain amount of formality with regard to class conduct. Although the actress called individual students by their first names, students were asked to address their teacher as "Madame." In addition, students were expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. They were required to stand when Madame entered the room and remain standing until they received permission to sit. However, the tone of class changed once Ouspenskaya started to teach. "She was formal when addressing us in a class or meeting us in a corridor, but she was completely informal in her teaching," remembers McCaslin. "When the class was over, she would revert to the 'respected professor' again and we would rise and stand silently until she and her entourage had left the room."[32] McCaslin recognizes that such formality might be misinterpreted by later generations of actors: "I suppose today's students could call her a dictator, but I wouldn't have used that word to describe her."[33]

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When asked about rumors that Ouspenskaya might suffer from alcoholism or other illness, McCaslin replied that she never saw indications of sickness. According to McCaslin, Ouspenskaya's personal behavior at the school was both discreet and admirable:

> She never mentioned her personal, religious, or political life and thought, although she occasionally referred to the Moscow Art Theatre. Her health was good - no sight of or demand for medicine [alcohol] that summer. She smoked in her office - never in class.34

McCaslin held especially high regard for Ouspenskaya's outward sense of style:

> She dressed beautifully - a neat, quiet elegance and a straight, slim figure. Her hair was done up in a bun at the nape of the neck and she wore no make-up. The precision that was so evident in her acting and her lesson plans was reflected in her appearance.35

Given McCaslin's descriptions, Ouspenskaya had either conquered the demons that plagued her during her earlier years of teaching, when students spoke of drinking and odd behavior, or she had learned to face her struggles in private.

Ouspenskaya maintained an aura of secrecy about her personal life, but she occasionally allowed glimpses into her private world. For example, she sometimes allowed reporters to visit her at her home.[36] The writers describe the actress's hillside house in Hollywood as a simple abode decorated with samovars, bronzes, and Oriental rugs, all of which gave the residence an Eastern image. On rare occasions, the actress also spoke to reporters about

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personal struggles of her past, including her trials during the Russian revolution. In an interview given about 1941, she admitted that her life had been filled with troubles. To cope, she tried to sustain a positive attitude:

> All through my life I have been stubborn about my dreams! Nothing could ever stop me from dreaming. If there is determination - if the wish is strong and built on a foundation of joy - in one way or another it will come true.37

Nevertheless, it was the sadness in her life that drew Ouspenskaya to acting. She wanted a normal life with family and friends, but the death of her father while she was still a young girl put a damper on such hopes, as did the years of war during her young adulthood. One reason she became an actress was to have an outlet for her feelings. "I took my emotions and put them into my parts," she explained. "That is not the same satisfaction we put into real life, but by bringing all the emotion I dreamed of having in my own life, my parts have gained."[38]

Ouspenskaya's strong emotional connection to acting influenced her refusal to end her busy performance career after her school became successful. To one reporter, she once said, "I could not live without acting nor could I live without teaching."[39] Ouspenskaya enjoyed the emotional and creative outlet that acting provided for her, and she believed that her acting career enhanced her teaching. In fact, she believed that it was a

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pedagogical necessity to continue to act at the same time that she taught:

> Yes, it is good to do so, for in that way I can prove by my acting all I teach to others. In fact, I couldn't teach unless I did act. It keeps me fresh and up to the minute. What was good drama in 1914 is no good now. The vogue changes in acting the same as in clothes.40

Maintaining an active performance career also allowed Ouspenskaya to bring to her students a practical knowledge of the latest advances in such diverse mediums as film, stage, radio, and television.[41]

Film acting, in particular, had prompted Ouspenskaya's move to Hollywood, and she quickly took advantage of her new location. In 1940, she saw the opening of seven films in which she appeared.

The first film was Metro-Goldwyn Mayer's Judge Hardy and Son, a sentimental contribution to a popular series of comedies about the fictional Hardy family that starred Mickey Rooney as Andy Hardy, the goodhearted son. The movie, probably filmed in the late summer or early fall of 1939, previewed at Westwood Village in Hollywood on 11 December 1939, but had its official New York opening in early January of 1940.[42] Directed by George Seitz, with a screenplay by Carey Wilson, Judge Hardy and Son concerns the Hardy family's struggle to cope with the illness of Mrs. Hardy, who had contracted a lifethreatening case of pneumonia. At the same time, Andy Hardy lightens

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the film's general mood with humorous antics revolving around a string of romantic and financial mixups.[43]

Ouspenskaya makes a brief appearance as an elderly woman named Mrs. Volduzzi in a subplot in which Judge Hardy, Andy's father, tries to help an old couple in danger of losing their home. A copy of the screenplay (dated 25 August 1939) describes the couple, Mr. and Mrs. Volduzzi, as "in [their] middle seventies, frightened immigrant folks, obviously betraying their foreign birth."[44] While assisting the couple with their home, Judge Hardy also repairs relations between Mrs. Volduzzi and her spoiled adult daughter.

In the tradition of other Hardy movies, the picture ends happily. Mrs. Hardy recovers, and all other problems are solved. Critics described Judge Hardy and Son as "touching," as well as "amusing and appealing," even though it "assumed a more serious aspect than most Hardy comedies."[45] Ouspenskaya and Egon Brecher, who played her husband, were credited with rounding out a satisfactory cast, even though both appear only briefly.[46]

Ouspenskaya later mentioned Judge Hardy and Son while discussing her work as a teacher. She described Mickey Rooney as the "epitome" of the modern generation of young performers for whom quick rewards had more value than the painstaking study of their craft.[47] Ouspenskaya worried that young talent was too often seized upon before it had time to develop. Speed may be fine in certain

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fields, but "just as in everything else, it has its place," she suggested. "This place is not the arts."[48] Although Ouspenskaya knew that she could never make it happen, her fantasy was to create a school in the desert "where students may study for ten months of every year unhurried by the press of circumstances."[49]

During the early months of 1940, Ouspenskaya kept busy with her Hollywood school, which began its spring term on January 29th. She also witnessed the opening of a second picture, Dr. Erlich's Magic Bullet, in February.[50] The movie, made for Warner Brothers, featured direction by William Dieterle from an original screenplay by John Huston, Heinz Herald, and Norman Bumside.[51] It is a biographical study of Dr. Paul Erlich, the Nobel prizewinning German bacteriologist whose most famous contribution to medical science was a cure for syphilis. The film followed the success of two other biographies produced by Warner Brothers and directed by Dieterle, The Story of Louis Pasteur (1935) and The Life of Emile Zola (1937).[52]

Critics gave Dr. Erlich's Magic Bullet rave reviews, crediting both the excellence of the storytelling and the quality performances of its cast members, particularly that of Edward G. Robinson, who played Dr. Erlich. "It is a splendid biography the Warners have turned out; richly lively, as exciting as any adventure into the unknown can be--whether it be the unknown of the jungle or the

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unknown of pathology," states Frank S. Nugent, critic for the New York Times.[53] Most impressive was the sensitive handling of the topic of syphilis. According to the critic for Variety, "There is nothing offensive in either action or dialog."[54]

Ouspenskaya enters midway through the picture for two brief scenes as Frau Franziska Speyer, an elderly rich lady from whom Erlich tries to obtain money for his research. A portion of the original screenplay describes the character's intended appearance at the dinner where Erlich pleads his case: "The old lady sits very erect, attired in black taffeta and beautiful pearl necklaces. Her eyes are brilliant and clever and searching; her manner of speech almost harsh."[55] In this dinner scene, one of the movie's more humorous scenes, Speyer shocks her other guests by asking Erlich to describe his plans and allowing him to draw on the fancy linen tablecloth. The audience discovers later that Speyer agrees to contribute to Erlich's research. Ouspenskaya, along with other members of a supporting cast that included Ruth Gordon and Otto Kruger, received critical praise.

The excitement attendant with the opening of Dr. Erlich's Magic Bullet was probably overshadowed by another event that occurred about the same time, Ouspenskaya's second nomination for an Academy Award on 12 February 1940.[56] Recognized for her work in the 1939 production of Love Affair, Ouspenskaya competed in the category of

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Best Supporting Actress with Hattie McDaniel in Gone With the Wind, Olivia De Havilland in Gone With the Wind, Geraldine Fitzgerald in Wuthering Heights, and Edna May Oliver in Drums Along the Mohawk.[57] Ouspenskaya lost to Hattie McDaniel at the banquet held on February 29th at the Ambassador Hotel. McDaniel's win represented an important moment in motion picture history; she was the first black person to win an Oscar, and she was the first to attend the banquet as a guest rather than as a waitress.[58]

Meanwhile, Ouspenskaya oversaw her students' production of The Cricket on the Hearth at several Los Angeles venues during March and April of 1940. During late spring and summer of that same year, she also witnessed the opening of three films in which she appeared: Waterloo Bridge, The Mortal Storm, and The Man I Married, all featuring wartime settings.

During the 1930's, Hollywood turned out lavish costume dramas and other escapist fare designed to entertain depression-weary moviegoers. But the advent of war in Europe during the latter part of the decade gradually influenced the subject matter and mission of filmmaking in the United States, particularly after Great Britain and France declared war against Germany in 1939.[59] Increasingly, political messages about the effects of war on average human beings began to make their appearance on American movie screens, even before the United States

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entered World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. To build American patriotism, films preached the advantages of democracy over dictatorships and the dangers of fascism. After the United States declared war on Germany and Italy in the West and Japan in the East, Hollywood played a vital role in maintaining public confidence in the war effort, telling the heroic tales of men and women who bravely performed their wartime duties. By the end of the war in 1945, filmmakers had become adept at shaping and controlling images of war to suit the propaganda needs of both producers and the War Department.[60]

Although set in London during World War I, MGM's Waterloo Bridge represents an early effort by the studios to foster sympathetic relations toward our future allies.[61] Melodrama and pathos figure prominently in Waterloo Bridge, just as they do in Mrs. Miniver, another popular film of the day with a wartime British setting. The story, adapted from Robert Sherwood's play, follows the fortunes of Myra, a sweet and unsophisticated ballet dancer, and Roy Cronin, a young British military officer.[62] The couple, played by Viven Leigh and Robert Taylor, meet on Waterloo Bridge and quickly fall in love on the eve of Roy's departure for the front. They plan to marry during the young officer's first furlough, but a melodramatic turn of events leads to an erroneous report of Roy's death, and Myra, who has been fired from her

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dance company, turns to the streets to make a living as a prostitute. The couple meets again at the Waterloo Bridge station, where Myra is soliciting, but renewed romance comes to an abrupt end when Myra commits suicide to prevent creating a stain on Roy's family name.

Critics were impressed by director Mervyn Leroy's handling of the sentimental tale when Waterloo Bridge opened in May of 1940.[63] Ouspenskaya merited mention as part of a strong supporting cast.[64] She played the role of Madame Olga Kirowa, a stern ballet mistress who supervises Myra's dance company in the early part of the film. Ouspenskaya enjoyed playing a character connected to the art of ballet, particularly since she had received extensive physical training during her years at the Moscow Art Theatre where she had practiced bar work, modern dance in the style of Isadora Duncan, character dances, eurhythmics, and acrobatics.[65] Nevertheless, Ouspenskaya noted that Madame Olga was more of a tyrant than any real-life ballet mistress she had known. In the film, Madame Olga demands complete devotion from her dancers, and she warns Myra against allowing her private life to interfere with her professional obligations. When Myra misses a performance to meet Roy before he leaves for the war, Madame Olga coldly dismisses her from the company. In an earlier scene, she had stated, "A war is no excuse for indecorum."[66] Madame Olga probably represents the

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most unsympathetic character Ouspenskaya would play during her film career.

Ouspenskaya returned to a more typical role in her next film of 1940, The Mortal Storm, playing Frau Breitner, a German peasant woman similar to roles that she had played during her early years acting in Russian repertoire. Frau Breitner is the mother of Martin, a young man who refuses to join the Nazi party during the early years of Hitler's regime, the mid-1930's. Martin (played by Jimmy Stewart) eventually plans an escape to Austria with Freya, the daughter of a professor sent to a concentration camp for refusing to promote Nazi doctrine. Martin succeeds, but Freya (played by Margaret Sullavan) is shot and dies.

Critics praised MGM's production of The Mortal Storm as an important piece of anti-Nazi propaganda after its opening in June of 1940.[67] The film, based on a novel by Phyllis Bottome, was viewed as a powerful indictment of Nazi brutality and a frightening reminder that similar horrors could also happen in the United States if its citizens were not wary. Frank Borzage, the director, received special commendation from the press. Ouspenskaya was also acknowledged for her work as part of a strong supporting cast. In interviews about the picture, Ouspenskaya mentioned her own experiences with war, and she also related that The Mortal Storm cast her with animals for the first time. She joked that "it is

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difficult to know how to cope with their kind of acting. They won me so completely that I bought a mare and a colt and have them now on my ranch at Victorville."[68]

Ouspenskaya's third war-related film, The Man I Married, opened in July of 1940. Like The Mortal Storm, The Man I Married figured as another effective piece of anti-Nazi propaganda. Originally titled I Married a Nazi, the movie was based on a story by Oscar Schisgall and directed by Irving Pickel for Twentieth Century-Fox. The film was noted for portraying the German Nazis "as hypnotized zealots rather than congenital brutes."[69]

Francis Lederer and Joan Bennett star as a married couple, Eric and Carol Hoffman, who travel to Germany in 1938 for a visit with Eric's father and the sale of the family's factory. In Germany, Eric falls under the influence of the Nazi party through his amorous affair with a German woman. Eric requests a divorce and states his intention to keep his young son with him in Germany. Fate intervenes at the last minute when Eric's father reveals that Eric's mother was Jewish, thus freeing the way for Carol to return to America with her son.

Ouspenskaya played Frau Gebhardt, the widow of Dr. Ernst Gebhardt, a famous professor killed by the Nazis. Her character appears for only one short scene when Carol and a reporter, played by Lloyd Nolan, bring money to her apartment, financial support from a relative in America. Selfless, Frau Gebhardt announces her plan to

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give the money to a son so that he might escape Germany. For Ouspenskaya, the role was similar to many others she had played before, but her performance rates among the most unselfconscious and sincere of her film appearances.

Shortly after the opening of The Man I Married, Ouspenskaya appeared in a sentimental romance with comic overtones, RKO's Beyond Tomorrow. It was probably lensed during the latter months of 1939 (with the working title And So Goodbye); the film previewed in a studio projection room in March of 1940 and opened on the East Coast in September of that year.[70] Directed by A. Edward Sutherland and based on story by Mildred Cram and Adele Comandini, Beyond Tomorrow told the story of three elderly men who decide to enliven a boring Christmas Eve by playing a little game designed to attract new faces to their holiday celebration, leaving their wallets in the snow to see who will return them. When a young man and a young woman return two of the wallets, the gentlemen invite the kind strangers to dinner, thus setting the stage for a romance. However, trouble strikes shortly after the couple's eventual engagement when the young man, who has become a radio star, falls victim to the charms of a blonde vixen who lures him into a new relationship. Help comes from a supernatural source; the three elderly gentlemen are killed in a plane crash, but their ghosts return to reunite the couple they brought together in the past. In the end, true love wins out.

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Critics found the ghostly happenings preposterous, but they praised the cast that featured Harry Carey, C. Aubrey Smith and Charles Winninger as the elderly gentlemen and Richard Carlson and Jean Parker as the young lovers. Ouspenskaya also received praise for her performance as Madame Tanya, the housekeeper for the gentlemen.[71] Madame Tanya appears frequently in the movie as a former member of the Russian aristocracy who graciously tends to the needs of her eccentric employers. More a friend than a servant, Madame Tanya accompanies the gentlemen and the young lovers on several fun-filled outings, including a trip to a bowling alley.

Ouspenskaya shared Madame Tanya's love for amusement and adventure. She once told a reporter that she could never be satisfied by watching others participate in entertaining activities if she could try them herself.[72] Her friend Bruce Coleman once spoke of the actress's capacity for fun when he described a trip with the actress to the honky-tonk section of Venice Pier where the two wound up dancing at a dime-a-dance ballroom. "She wore me out," stated Coleman.[73] Hollywood publications often pictured the actress exploring the city's nightlife on the arm of a young escort like John Garfield or Eddie Albert.[74]

Although casting directors and makeup artists bemoaned one of Ouspenskaya's favorite recreational activities, sunbathing in the desert, the actress rarely allowed fun

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to interfere with work. If anything, she fostered good feelings on a set:

> Grips, propmen, electricians, actors, directors, hail her when she comes on a set for she's famous as a character. . . . She has a great respect for everyone who works on making pictures. "They are all artists," she says. "An electrician can be as important as Hamlet."75

In acting as in teaching, the actress regularly displayed a professional demeanor.

Ouspenskaya followed her appearance in Beyond Tomorrow with another performance as a dance mistress in RKO's Dance, Girl, Dance. Directed by Dorothy Arzner (1900-1979), one of the first important female directors of the sound era in cinema, Dance, Girl, Dance is now recognized as an important example of early feminist filmmaking. One historian writes that "it's a film that--with its sympathy for the 'poor working class stiff' as well as its commitment to a woman's right to fulfilment through work--blends the heritage of the socially aware 1930's with the more clearly articulated demands of women in the early 1940's."[76] But critics of the film who viewed either its preview in August of 1940 or its New York opening in October of that year found the film perplexing.[77] Primed to view the movie as a stereotypical backstage saga about a dancer's rise to fame and fortune, critics couldn't understand the film's lack of humor.

Maureen O'Hara played the film's lead, a young woman who dreams of becoming a great ballerina. However, tragedy

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prevents her appearance at an important audition, so she is forced to take work on the burlesque stage where an ambitious friend, played by Lucille Ball, has already become a star. O'Hara's character gains a certain amount of fame playing second banana to her friend, but finally vents her disgust with the leering men who attend burlesque shows by delivering a blistering feminist speech to the mostly male audience during the middle of a performance. A famous producer who has been following her career hears her speech and goes to her defense. He later hires O'Hara's character to perform with his famous dance company, thus bringing the picture to a happy end.

Ouspenskaya makes several appearances in the early part of the film as Madame Basilova, a former star of the ballet who finds herself directing second-rate troupes of female dancers to appear in smalltime nightclubs. Madame Basilova recognizes the talents of O'Hara's character, at the same time that she is forced to make money by peddling the sex appeal of Ball's character. When O'Hara's character fails to capture the interest of a sleazy nightclub owner during her audition with a hula act, Basilova explains the occasional merits of being born with "oomph." Kind at heart, Basilova eventually takes O'Hara's character to meet with a famous producer. Unfortunately, a car strikes and kills Madame Basilova as she crosses a street, thus preventing the scheduled audition.

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The critic for Variety felt that Ouspenskaya was "wasted in a role not commensurate with her dramatic abilities."[78] However, viewers today might appreciate the subtle complexities in Ouspenskaya's performance of Madame Basilova, as well as the character's wry humor. A screenplay for Dance, Girl, Dance shows that the character was originally envisioned as a man, Vladimir Basiloff, a gender difference that would have softened the feminist tone of the film.[79]

Contrary to critical opinion, Ouspenskaya probably considered the role of Madame Basilova to be a worthy professional choice. The actress chose parts that met a set of well-defined personal criteria. She explained in a 1940 newspaper article:

> I'm not difficult to please where roles are concerned. All I ask is that when I read them, I can feel something more than words at the tip of my tongue, something deep inside, whether it's comedy or drama. I don't want long roles. I don't like characters who depend upon the lines authors give them to say rather than on the thing authors intimate they should do. I want to complete a character so that there is no doubt of his intentions. Then and only then, I want to move onto something else.80

To scare away agents and producers who might offer her roles unworthy of her talents, Ouspenskaya demanded a fee of $750.00 per day, a princely sum in the 1940's.[81] However, the actress acknowledged that even small parts might be jewels, and she was willing to try many different roles as long as they seemed appropriate.[82] She told a reporter, "If I feel a part is a repetition of a former

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role, I refuse it. If I feel it isn't suited to me, I have none of it."[83]

When choosing parts, Ouspenskaya tried to remember her limitations. For example, she was aware of her accent, so she only played characters who might logically possess an accent.[84] She also recognized her time constrictions, so she refused a regular studio contract and accepted only freelance work that might be scheduled during holidays and vacations of her school.[85] Interestingly, Ouspenskaya's love of her students was the cause of her refusal to play villians. She explained in an interview that she might accept a part with a streak of "sadism" in it, but she could never play a morally bad woman. She worried that such a performance might undermine her classroom authority:

> I am not married. I have no children. These pupils are my children. And I have the idea that if they saw me in such a role, even on the screen, they will lose respect for me. So I'll never do it, not for all the producers in Hollywood.86

True to her word, Ouspenskaya never played an unredeemably evil woman in any of her twenty films.

Ouspenskaya's pace slowed considerably in 1941; she acted in only three films: The Wolf Man, The Shanghai Gesture, and Kings Row. All three would have either openings or previews shortly after the Japanese bombings of Pearl Harbor on December 7th.

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The Wolf Man, which opened in New York in late December, was a new addition to a long line of popular horror films produced by Universal after its success with Dracula in 1930 and Frankenstein in 1931.[87] Producers at Universal had long admired such German horror classics of the silent film era as The Golem (1914), The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920), and Nosferatu (1922). When many German actors, directors, writers, and technicians fled political turmoil in Europe during the 1920's and the 1930's, several found a home at Universal, thus providing the studio with the tools to create its own horror classics, movies with possible political overtones.[88]

The Wolf Man seems a typical example of a horror picture with its spooky settings and supernatural happenings. However, it also features certain elements that might remind the viewer of the bestial realities of war. For example, the subject of wolves has political associations. Wolves feature prominently in the Teutonic and Nordic mythology admired by Adolph Hitler, who maintained a fascination with wolves, even calling himself "Herr Wolf."[89] In addition, the setting of the film suggests wartime Europe. Although purported to be Wales, the location of The Wolf Man is geographically indeterminate. A film historian writes, "The Europe of American horror movies was a nearly surreal pastiche of accents, architecture, and costumes, like the scrambled

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impressions of a soldier/tourist on a whirlwind tour of duty."[90]

The story of The Wolf Man, written by Curt Siodman, traces the actions of Larry Talbot, a Welsh aristocrat who returns to his ancestral home after living for a long period in America. In Wales, Larry, played by Lon Chaney, Jr., reunites with his father, Sir John Talbot, played by Claude Raines. He also falls in love with a local girl, Gwen, played by Evelyn Ankers, from whom he buys a silvertipped cane connected with the werewolf legend. On a dark night in the woods, Larry encounters a wolf and kills it with his cane. The body of the wolf transforms into the corpse of a gypsy named Bela, played by Bela Lugosi, who had earlier predicted disaster. Larry, who had been bitten by the wolf, starts to have nightmares and turns into a wolf himself on several nights. Sir John, who fears future attacks by this strange wolf, eventually manages to kill it with Larry's cane and the help of a character played by Ralph Bellamy. He is horrified to see the dead wolf turn into the corpse of his own son.

Critics of the day displayed little enthusiasm for The Wolf Man, complaining about its weak story. For example, the critic of the New York Motion Picture Herald wrote, "Producer-director George Waggner owes more to his players than to Curt Siodman's script, which falls short of the Universal standard of effectiveness in the

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field of the horror film."[91] The reviewer for Variety termed the movie a "B dual supporter," while the critic for the New York Times spoke of the cast's apparent discomfort with the material: "Most of them [the actors] look as though they wished they had a wolf-skin to jump into--any old wolf skin, so long as it was anonymous."[92]

Despite the lack of critical support, The Wolf Man achieved a popular success that spawned several sequels, also starring Lon Chaney, Jr. For Ouspenskaya, the film provided one of her best-known roles, Maleva, the gypsy woman related to Bela. The image of Ouspenskaya dressed in gypsy garments and driving a rickety horse-drawn cart is integral to the movie's haunting atmosphere. The actress's heavily accented delivery of lines also helped to blur the boundaries of reality, particularly during those moments when she delivers the film's most famous piece of poetry, a gypsy incantation:

> Every man who is pure in heart
> And says his prayers by night
> May become a wolf when the wolfbane blooms
> And the autumn moon is bright.93

Ouspenskaya played another exotic character in her second film of 1941, Warner Brothers' production of The Shanghai Gesture, which also opened in late December.[94] Her role was that of Amah an aged Oriental servant and adviser to the owner of a gambing casino.

The Shanghai Gesture, which was based on a popular play from the 1920's by John Colton, featured a large

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cast of other important actors, including Gene Tierney, Walter Huston, Victor Mature, and Oona Munson. It told the story of several depraved characters who are manipulated by the casino's owner, Madame Gin Sling. When an English businessman purchases property in the district of the casino, he tells Madame Gin Sling to close shop. She seeks revenge by leading the businessman's daughter to moral and financial ruin, at the same time that she claims the young woman is her daughter from a past relationship with the businessman. The businessman denies the relationship, but finally leaves his rebellious daughter to the care of Madame Gin Sling. In the end, the young woman disobeys her new guardian, so Madame Gin Sling shoots her.

The sordid story fared poorly in its film incarnation. Reviewers criticized poor direction by Josef von Sternberg and bad acting on the part of the leads. Another detriment to the production was the way in which the original story had been changed and sanitized to meet the Production Code of the Hays Office, the organization that regulated morality in movies from 1934.[95] In the play, for example, Madame Gin Sling was known as Mother Goddam, and she ran a brothel instead of a casino. Nevertheless, the film foreshadowed the appearance of a popular 1940's film style known as "film noir," wherein characters revealed a "blackness" of soul through stories featuring perversity and twisted eroticism.[96] Fear, greed, lust for power,

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obsession, and insanity drive the action of The Shanghai Gesture, a plot feature characteristic of later "film noir" works.

Critics expressed dismay at Ouspenskaya's brief appearance in The Shanghai Gesture, a single scene in which she stands behind Madame Gin Sling at a dinner party. They complain that she was "completely lost" in an inconsequential role, appearing "for only flashes, nary speaking a word."[97] Ouspenskaya makes the best of her small part, though. Without speaking a single line, she manages to flesh out her character through skillful use of facial expressions and pantomime.

Ouspenskaya received a more substantial role in her third film of 1941, Kings Row, wherein she played an elderly woman dying of cancer, the grandmother of the hero. As Madame Von Eln, Ouspenskaya oversees the upbringing of her grandson, Parris Mitchell, played by Robert Cummings. As the film's moral compass, she reminds Parris and others about the necessity of treating all persons with compassion and kindness.

The Warner Brothers production of Kings Row had its formal New York opening in February of 1941.[98] Its story was derived from a popular and controversial novel by Henry Bellman. Director Sam Wood faced a difficult task in bringing the book to the screen because it featured frank examinations of mental illness, sexuality, and sadistic behavior. A screenplay by Casey Robinson and

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the deletion of a storyline about incest helped the film past the censors.[99]

The main storyline centers around the fortunes of Parris, a young man who aspires to become a doctor at the turn of the century, eventually studying psychiatry in Vienna. His medical mentor in the Midwestern town of Kings Row is Dr. Tower, enacted by Claude Raines, whose daughter, Cassandra, played by Betty Fields, is the mentally unstable childhood sweetheart of Parris. Parris and Cassandra have an affair that ends in tragedy when Dr. Tower kills both his daughter and himself. In the meantime, another childhood friend of Parris, Drake McHugh, falls in love with a character played by Ann Sheridan, Randy Monaghan, a woman from the working class section of town. Drake, depicted by a young Ronald Reagan, experiences his own disasters when a banker embezzles his trust fund and another local doctor, Dr. Gordon, unnecessarily amputates both his legs after a train accident. Dr. Gordon, played by the well-known stage actor Charles Coburn, hated Drake because his daughter, Louise, loved the young man. Judith Anderson played Mrs. Gordon, a despicable woman who conspires with her husband in committing acts of hate. In the end, Parris returns from his studies in Vienna to set things to right and find a new love.

Critical reactions to Kings Row were mixed. The New York Times panned the picture, calling it "gloomy"

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and "ponderous," but the Cleveland Plain Dealer named it "one of the season's most memorable and uncompromising films."[100] Variety called the movie "impressive and occasionally inspiring, although overlong." Ouspenskaya, who appears in three short scenes, received special notice for her performance, one of the most relaxed and natural characterizations of her film career. Variety noted that she "underplays arrestingly as the hero's fatally ill grandmother."[101] The New York Herald Tribune mentioned that she added an "unexpected characterization" to the picture, while the critic for the Wall Street Journal wrote, "Maria Ouspenskaya, taking the part of the hero's grandmother, submits a moving contribution of a woman of refinement succumbing to the agonies of cancer."[102]

About the time she appeared in Kings Row, Ouspenskaya received an offer of ten thousand dollars to write a textbook about the technique of acting for a leading publisher. She refused as she apparently had on previous occasions. "I do not believe that it is possible to learn acting from books," she said. "An actor masters his craft in only two ways--first, by living; secondly, by practice."[103]

Meanwhile, the official opening of Kings Row in February of 1942 occurred between two productions given by the Maria Ouspenskaya School for Dramatic Arts, George Washington Slept Here, which opened on January 30th, and Dear Octopus, on March 21st. In addition, the school

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featured a special summer term of classes. Occupied with teaching, Ouspenskaya added only one more film to her repertoire in 1942, The Mystery of Marie Roget.

The Mystery of Marie Roget, which was loosely based on a short story by Edgar Allen Poe, had its New York opening in early May.[104] Ouspenskaya played the role of the elderly Mme. Roget, the mother of Marie Roget, a beautiful Parisian musical star, played by Maria Montez. When Maria disappears at the same time that the mutilated corpse of an unknown woman is found under mysterious circumstances, amateur detective Paul Dupin, played by Patric Knowles, attempts to solve both mysteries. After he questions several subjects, he provides an unexpected solution, a non-human killer.

Critics generally disliked the Universal production of The Mystery of Marie Roget, noting an absence of excitement, as well as a lack of clarity. Ouspenskaya, however, received favorable reviews. For example, the critic for Variety states, "Maria Ouspenskaya provides her usually polished performance," and the writer for the Hollywood Reporter suggests that she gave one of the best performances in the cast.[105] The reviewer from the New York Journal-American reported that members of the cast, including Ouspenskaya, "work hard to sustain interest in the heavy-handed script."[106] At the same time, the critic for the New York Herald wrote, "Patric Knowles heads the company and Maria Ouspenskaya contributes a

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rather sharp piece of characterization, but the performers are generally stumped by a lackadaisical treatment of a horror classic."[107]

School demands and her growing participation with several organizations designed to support the morale of American servicemen kept Ouspenskaya busy for the remainder of 1942. Working at the Hollywood Canteen rated among one of Ouspenskaya's favorite activities.[108] At the Hollywood Canteen, which was founded in 1942 by Bette Davis and John Garfield, celebrities entertained and conversed with lonely young servicemen. Ouspenskaya also held a card as an honorary member of the 34 Club, an organization formed to lift the spirits of the crewmen of the U.S.S. New York.

Ouspenskaya's only film opening for the year of 1943 was that for Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man, which opened in New York on March 5th.[109] The Universal production, directed by Roy William Neill and written by Curtis Siodmak, continued the saga begun in 1941's The Wolf Man.

In Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man, the Wolfman/Larry Talbot, again played by Lon Chaney, Jr., is disinterred and returns to life. He lands in a hospital where Ouspenskaya's castmate from The Mystery of Marie Roget, Patric Knowles, plays a doctor sympathetic to his strange physical condition. With the aid of Ouspenskaya, who returns to the role of the gypsy Maleva, Talbot travels to an eerie Balkan country to seek additional medical

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advice from Dr. Frankenstein, the man who had manipulated the life force to create a monster. He discovers Dr. Frankenstein is dead, but Frankenstein's daughter, in partnership with Knowles' character, agrees to help him. Unfortunately, plans go awry, and the reanimated Monster becomes enraged. The movie ends when the battling Wolfman and Monster are washed away by a flood. Bela Lugosi returned to the screen in the role of the Monster, a role originally popularized by Boris Karloff.

Reviews for the picture were lukewarm, but audiences still flocked to Frankstein Meets the Wolf Man. Universal executives seemed surprised that this and other horror films continued to attract moviegoers after America entered World War II. David Skall, author of a critical study of horror films, provides a possible reason: "Talbot's four-film quest to put to rest his wolf-self is, in a strange way, a conscious parable of the war effort."[110] Skall suggests that "the Wolf-Man's crusade for eternal peace and his frustrated attempts to control irrational and violent, European forces continued in Universal's House of Frankenstein (1944) and House of Dracula (1945)."[111] Skall's theory might seem farfetched, but a lobby cutout at the Times Square premiere of Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man apparently showed a picture of the duelling demons above a straightforward directive asking the audience to buy war bonds and stamps.

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Ouspenskaya, as Maleva, appeared in several scenes in Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man, which was shot during October and November of 1942.[112] The critic for the Philadelphia Inquirer of 5 March 1943 wrote, "Maria Ouspenskaya comes nearest to lending conviction to any of the roles, as the old gypsy woman who knows the werewolf secret."[113] Her performance is unusually unrestrained.

Ouspenskaya closed her school in January of 1943 after many staff members and students left for the war.[114] The school's closure allowed the actress to return to New York later that year to appear in her final Broadway production, Outrageous Fortune, which opened on 3 November 1943 at the 48th Street Theatre and ran for seventy-seven performances.[115] The play, written and staged by Rose Franken, fascinated and confused critics.[116] The play covered an excessive range of topics, such as anti-Semitism, homosexuality, bisexuality, infidelity, and fear of aging and death, and the result was a muddled plot.

Outrageous Fortune examines a holiday weekend at the home of a wealthy but maladjusted Jewish family. On this weekend, a wise woman of the world visits and helps individual family members to see their lives more clearly. This vistor, played by Elsie Ferguson, dies of a heart condition near the end of the play after having achieved only partial success in shedding light on the family's problems.

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Ouspenskaya played the foreign-born matriarch of the troubled Harris family. Her son, Bert, and his wife, Madeline, played by Frederic Tozere and Margalo Gillmore, maintain a long but passionless marriage. Bert's younger brother, Julian, is engaged to a woman named Kitty Fields, even though he is homosexual and Kitty is in love with another man who has bisexual leanings. The family's problems are compounded by the plight of Dr. Goldsmith, a Jewish family friend who is frustrated by his love for Madeline and his loss of a desired hospital post due to racial prejudice. Margaret Hamilton, best known for her role as the Wicked Witch in The Wizard of Oz, played Goldsmith's loving Irish wife.

Ouspenskaya's character is a central figure in the play, a woman stranded in an alien culture whose children are ashamed of her love for pickled herring, lentil soup, and other reminders of a humble past they want to hide. Critics applauded her performance. Howard Barnes of the New York Herald Tribune captured the sentiment of most reviewers when he said, "Miss Ferguson and Mme. Ouspenskaya dominate the acting with truly brilliant portrayals of the two characters who are best equipped to withstand slings and arrows."[117] Lewis Nichols of the New York Times wrote, "Maria Ouspenskaya is the matriarch, and as usual hers is a clear-cut and tender portrait," and Robert Garland noted in the New York Journal-American that "Maria Ouspenskaya is her always welcome and familiar

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self as the oldest of the harried Harrises."[118] While Wilella Waldorf of the New York Post related that Ouspenskaya was "a privilege to watch," Burton Roscoe of the New York World-Telegram responded to her performance with a touch of humor: "Ouspenskaya was her usual adorable self, which is a sort of combination of a tiny female Tiresias, the Cumean sybil and Jurgen's grandmother."[119]

Unfortunately, Ouspenskaya's successful run in Outrageous Fortune came to an unhappy end when the actress became ill with pneumonia in January of 1944. Ouspenskaya was diagnosed with the disease after displaying symptoms during a matinee on Wednesday January 6th. Her doctor, Dr. William Hitzig, was in the audience, and he "noticed that his patient's hands were trembling more noticeably than usually and that her lips were blue."[120] He went backstage where he discovered that Ouspenskaya had a 104° fever. Hitzig wanted to rush his patient immediately to the hospital, but she insisted on playing the five remaining performances scheduled for that week. She argued that she had no understudy, so producers would have to disappoint audiences and refund money. When Hitzig countered that Ouspenskaya would be committing suicide if she stayed in the show, she reportedly replied, "I would be committing spiritual suicide if I didn't." She then added, "If a soldier sneezed, would he refuse to go into battle? I am an artist and when you love what you do, you find the energy to do it."[121]

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Recognizing his patient's stubborn dedication to her craft, Hitzig allowed Ouspenskaya to finish the week's run. However, he injected her with sulfa drugs, and he arranged to have a cot placed backstage where Ouspenskaya could rest between scenes, closely observed by a special nurse. When the last show ended, Hitzig moved the actress from her suite at the New Weston to Mount Sinai hospital.

"I felt that as long as my brain was clear I could play," Ouspenskaya later explained when she spoke of the whole episode. "I stumbled a bit while playing the piano in one scene, but all the time I felt strong. It was second nature and I went right through the performance. I didn't change the role one iota."[122] She also stated that her decision to continue in the show despite adversity was in keeping with the indominable spirit of the character she played.

While she recovered from her illness, Ouspenskaya studied a script for a radio program, A Son to Be Proud Of. She was scheduled to lend her voice to the production on 22 January 1944 for the Armstrong Theatre of Today.

Shortly before appearing on the program, Ouspenskaya spoke to members of Zeta Phi Eta, a sorority for women in dramatics, of which she was an honorary member. She lectured on the technique of acting for different mediums: the stage, movies, radio, and television. She stressed the importance of being sincere and learning to use all

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five senses, and she stated, "Acting is always acting." Then she offered some specific advice:

> Only the application of the technique is different. You create the character the same way, no matter what the medium. The amount of emotion is the same, but you project it a long distance or a short distance, according to the requirements of the medium.123

Ouspenskaya noted that the distance necessary for projection had grown smaller as actors moved from large stages to studios with cameras and microphones that required greater simplicity in both facial and vocal expressions. "Television," she concluded, "is the most refined medium acting has ever known. It presents the greatest challenge to actors--to free their acting of all tricks and let it shine forth in simplicity and truth."[124]

After speaking to the sorority and completing her work on the radio show, Ouspenskaya returned to Hollywood, where she threw herself into more activities designed to help the troops fighting World War II. She expressed a desire to travel overseas to entertain the soldiers, and she asked to go "to Guadalcanal and other remote places where USO shows don't ordinarily appear."[125] She had discovered during trips to various camps and canteens in the United States that servicemen appreciated her nurturing qualities. She talked about her likely appeal to the young men overseas in a 1943 interview:

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> They want pin-up girls and lovely young women certainly, but they would want me also if I were allowed to go to them. To them I am grandma. People do not want to laugh all the time. They want that which comes from the heart, and I could bring that to the men of the armies.126

No record exists of an overseas trip, so Ouspenskaya probably didn't get her wish. However, writers of the day mention that she corresponded regularly with many friends and former students who had travelled to the war's scattered fronts.

Little is known about Ouspenskaya's activities after 1944. She appeared in four more films before her untimely death in 1949, and she may have continued to teach privately. However, her school was still closed in 1946, and no records mention its reopening.[127] Probably poor health caused Ouspenskaya's reduction of activity, although the actress claimed she possessed a strong constitution. Nevertheless, she appears frail and sickly in her only 1945 film, Tarzan and the Amazons. Her hands visibly shake, and she folds her arms in a manner designed to disguise the movement.

Tarzan and the Amazons premiered in Hollywood on 16 March 1945 and had its New York opening in late April.[128] The film represented a fair entry in the popular RKO series about jungle-dwelling Tarzan. Johnny Weissmuller played Tarzan; Johnny Sheffield was Boy, Tarzan's son; and Brenda Joyce portrayed Jane, Tarzan's mate, a role made famous by Maureen O'Sullivan.

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In Tarzan and the Amazons, Tarzan is confronted with protecting a secretive and wealthy tribe of women who make their home in the African jungle near Tarzan's own residence. A visiting group of archaeologists trick Boy into leading them to the women's secret city after Cheeta, Tarzan's chimp, accidentally reveals the tribe's existence. A battle ensues when some of the archaeologists try to steal the women's cache of golden objects. The female warriors kill the men and plan to execute Boy. At the last minute, Tarzan swings in to save his son, and order is restored.

Ouspenskaya's role as the queen of the "Amazons" provided her with little opportunity to show her skills as a performer. To her credit, she managed to look regal as she alternately prayed to a golden idol and pronounced judgement on intruders to her kingdom. Reviewers, perhaps wisely, fail to mention Ouspenskaya's appearance in the film that the critic for the New York Times described as "a little on the ludicrous side."[129]

Ouspenskaya's next screen appearance, as Madame Goronoff in the 1946 Republic Studio production of I've Always Loved You, allowed her the chance to display her acting talents to advantage. It was also her only role in a color film.

Directed by Frank Borzage and based on a story by Borden Chase, I've Always Loved You resembled many of the escapist romances of the 1930's. Its plot followed

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the fortunes of a female piano prodigy, Myra Hassman, as she falls in love with her older mentor, Leopold Goronoff, an egocentric womanizer, played by Phillip Dorn. Myra, played by Catherine McLeod, accompanies Leopold on his foreign tours, but she fails to capture his affections, and she returns home to the family farm after her disastrous concert debut at Carnegie Hall, a musical effort deliberately ruined by her jealous teacher. At home, Myra marries a more stable man and eventually has a child. Years later, she vanquishes lingering doubts about her choice to marry and give up her career after she is reunited with Goronoff for a second and more successful concert at Carnegie Hall.

Critics generally panned I've Always Loved You even though the film featured lavish settings and several musical pieces played by Arthur Rubenstein.[130] Surprisingly, reviewers never mention Ouspenskaya, even though she was a constant presence in the film because her character, Leopold's mother, accompanies the concert star and Myra on their travels to Europe and South America. In several scenes, she counsels both Myra and Leopold, providing sensible advice. In many ways, Madame Goronoff resembled the aristocratic older women Ouspenskaya had often played during the 1930's, particularly during the later part of the movie when the elderly matriarch gently forces her son to face his love for Myra and his

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appreciation of his former student's talents. Ouspenskaya underplays a death scene soon thereafter.

After the completion of I've Always Loved You, Herbert Yates, the head of Republic Studio, apparently complimented Ouspenskaya on her performance and expressed a wish to have her work for him again on another film. In response, Ouspenskaya reportedly replied, "Why don't you get me a gold rush story?" She then added, "I love horses and I want to drive a runaway stage coach with bags of gold in it and bandits after me."[131]

Ouspenskaya got what she wanted when she signed to appear in Republic's production of Wyoming in 1947. The film lacks a gold rush story, but it operates as a typical Western with its tale of ranchers feuding with incoming homesteaders in the rugged Wyoming territory during the nineteenth century. Wyoming also featured two popular actors associated with Westerns, "Wild Bill" Elliott and George "Gabby" Hayes. It was directed by Joseph Kane from a screenplay by Lawrence Hazard and Gerald Geraghty.

The story of Wyoming traces the changing fortunes of a rancher named Charles Anderson, Elliott's character, who faces problems when Congress passes the Homestead Act, giving homesteaders the right to farm land that the ranchers had previously used as their own. Matters become more complicated when Duke Lassiter, played by Albert Dekker, uses the homesteaders as a pawn in a villianous cattle rustling game carried out against the ranchers.

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Lassiter also tries to win the attention of the widowed Anderson's girlfriend, a saloon owner played by Virgina Grey. Anderson's daughter, played by Vera Ralston, feels that her father is wrong in planning to fight the homesteaders and sides with her father's foreman, Glen Forrester, who wants a legal resolution to the land struggles. Forrester, played by John Carroll, eventually proves the wisdom of his beliefs and also exposes Lassiter's evildoing.

Wyoming opened in July of 1947 to generally positive reviews. Ouspenskaya, who played Maria, the nurse to Ralston's character, was praised for her acting even though critics thought she was an illogical choice for her part. The critic for Variety writes that "the presence of Miss Ralston and Mme. Maria Ouspenskaya in this mesa melange is somewhat of a mystery. Accent of the former, onetime skating star (Vera Hruba), is explained away by a long hiatus in European finishing schools while Mme. Ouspenskaya is obviously out of place as a nurse and family retainer out in the virgin Wyoming territory."[132] The critic for the New York Times expresses similar feelings: "Vera Ralston, as the daughter, is a pretty blonde who is as implausible among those pioneer Western surroundings as is her nurse, Maria Ouspenskaya, late of the Moscow Art Theatre."[133] Nonetheless, Ouspenskaya charms the viewers in her many scenes as Maria, as she again plays the familiar character of a wise older woman. Maria repeatedly

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preaches the need to handle both the land problems and troubled relationships in a careful manner. A humorous highlight of Ouspenskaya's role is her teasing interplay with a crusty rancher played by Gabby Hayes. The scene in which the two actors join a singalong of "Git Along, Little Doggies" provides a startling visual image.

Ouspenskaya returned to more familiar territory when she played a wise piano teacher in her final film, Warner Brothers' 1949 production of A Kiss in the Dark. The movie, a contemporary comedy, starred David Niven and Jane Wyman. The screenplay by Harry Kurnitz (based on a story by Everett and Devery Freeman) depicts the mishaps of Eric Phillips, a highstrung concert pianist who is forced to look beyond his own sheltered world when he becomes the proprietor of an urban apartment building with an eccentric assortment of tenants. Nivens played Phillips, and Wyman played Polly Harris, a carefree and beautiful photographer's model who wins Phillip's heart. Broderick Crawford was featured as a complaining tenant.

A Kiss in the Dark, directed by Delmer Daves, opened in March of 1949.[134] Reviewers criticized the movie's weak and unimaginative script and mention Ouspenskaya's appearance only to say that she gave a "capable" performance as a famous music teacher who advises Niven's character not to let the piano dominate his life as it dominated hers.[135] Nevertheless, Ouspenskaya left a

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lasting impression on her co-stars. Wyman's biographer, Lawrence J. Quirk, writes the following:

> Both Wyman and Niven had fond memories of Ouspenskaya. In 1951, when I interviewed Niven in New York during the run of his stage comedy, Nina, with Gloria Swanson, he paid tribute to Ouspenskaya's unique force of personality and fascinating mannerisms born of Moscow Art Theatre training and years on the stage in America. "Jane and I were deeply moved by her," he said. "She was very tiny, very wizened, looked like she'd shrivel up before your eyes, but oh the force in that little lady. She just glowed."136

Unfortunately, Ouspenskaya's radiance came to an abrupt and tragic end. Less than a year after the opening of A Kiss in the Dark, the actress died, the victim of an accidental fire at her home.

The tragedy occurred early in the morning of Thursday December 1st when Ouspenskaya fell asleep in her bed while smoking a cigarette.[137] She was dragged from the flaming bedclothes by her houseguest, Inez Simons, a friend and former student. Simons extinguished the flames before calling Ouspenskaya's doctor, Dr. Marion J. Dakin, for assistance. The fire was limited to a mattress area about twelve inches in diameter. After receiving Simons' call, Dr. Dakin hurried to Ouspenskaya's house at 1600 N. Martel Avenue where he treated the actress before arranging for her transfer to St. Joseph Hospital in Burbank. Ouspenskaya was suffering extreme shock from second and third degree burns to her back and her legs. She died at the Motion Picture Relief Home the following Saturday, on 3 December 1949.[138]

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Funeral services for Ouspenskaya were held on December 6th.[139] Paramahansa Yogananda of the Self-Realization Church of All Religions offered spoken and chanted prayers at Pierce Brothers Hollywood Mortuary. The actress's cremated remains were entombed in the Chapel of the Pines at Forest Lawn Cemetery.

Although the decision to have an Indian holyman speak at Ouspenskaya's funeral seems an eccentric gesture, it was not as odd as it might appear today. Paramahansa Yogananda led a popular Hollywood church of the day whose followers admired Eastern religious thought but found truth in all religions.[140] The Self-Realization Church of All Religions would have appealed to Ouspenskaya who shared similar beliefs. She once explained her philosophy of religion to a Hollywood reporter: "Now, even though I belong to the church I believe that I have outgrown the one church. I feel that I belong to all of them, Christian or non-Christian."[141] Yogananda offered an appropriate tribute to Ouspenskaya, quoted in the New York Times: "In the drama of life, she played her part well."[142]

NOTES--CHAPTER 7

[1] The Maria Ouspenskaya Private Studios of Dramatic Arts, advertisement for opening of 1939-1940 season, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection. Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[2] Unidentified clipping, 16 May 1939, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

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[3] Maria Ouspenskaya, ts., "Guest Column for Hedda Hopper," 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[4] The Maria Ouspenskaya Private Studios of Dramatic Arts, advertisement for opening of 1939-1940 season, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[5] "Only America Holds Life Force for Art," Dallas News 25 June 1940; Maria Ouspenskaya, "One Lone Foe of Typing," unidentified clipping, c. 1940, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[6] The Maria Ouspenskaya Private Studios of Dramatic Arts, advertisement for opening of the 1939-1940 season, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. Information about specific staff members comes from brochures from the Hollywood School: The Maria Ouspenskaya Private Studios of Dramatic Arts, Brochures from the 1939-1940 season, the 1940-1941 season, the spring semester of 1941, and the 1941-1942 season, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. Each brochure also lists dates, fees, and general class informantion.

[7] Brochure for the 1939-1940 season.

[8] Brochure for the spring semester of 1941.

[9] Brochure for the 1939-1940 season.

[10] Notable Names in the American Theatre (Clifton, New Jersey: James T. White and Company, 1976) 804. Dale Moffitt, head of the undergraduate acting program at Southern Methodist University, provided invaluable assistance in attempts to contact his former teachers from Berkley, Fred and Mary Harris, during the early phase of this dissertation. Unfortunately, both of the Harrises were ill, and Mary Harris died on 5 January 1994.

Just previous to his wife's death, Fred Harris managed to convey a couple of messages about Ouspenskaya through Dr. Moffit. He mentioned that both he and his wife held Ouspenskaya in fond regard. He also spoke of Ouspenskaya's steadfast refusal to write a biography or a textbook because she believed that acting is a living art. While relaying these messages by phone in November of 1993, Dr. Moffitt praised the teaching of the Harrises. He noted that Mary Harris influenced the training of scores of Berkley students, even though she was not a regular member of the faculty. Incidentally, Dr. Moffitt was

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the first college acting teacher of this dissertation's author, so Ouspenskaya's legacy comes full circle via the Harrises.

[11] See brochures from the Maria Ouspenskaya Private Studios of Dramatic Arts.

[12] Advertising booklet for the Maria Ouspenskaya Studios of Dramatic Arts, c. 1939 or 1940, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA; Inez Wallace, "It's Never Too Late to Act, Says Maria Ouspenskaya, 50, New Scene Stealer," unidentified clipping, c. 1940 or 1941, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[13] Advertising booklet for the Maria Ouspenskaya Studios of Dramatic Arts, c. 1939 or 1940, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, UCLA. A former student, Nellie McCaslin, also describes the composition of the school's student body in a letter to this dissertation's author dated 3 November 1994.

[14] Wallace, "It's Never Too Late to Act."

[15] Unidentified clipping, Variety 2 April 1941. Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[16] Rosalind Shaffer, "Young in Spirit, If Not Years," Boston Post 1 Jan. 1946.

[17] Advertising booklet for the Maria Ouspenskaya Studios of Dramatic Arts, c. 1939 or 1940, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[18] Advertising booklet for the Maria Ouspenskaya Studios of Dramatic Arts, c. 1939 or 1940, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[19] Program for presentation of The Cricket on the Hearth by the Maria Ouspenskaya Private Studios of Dramatic Arts, spring 1940, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA; Unidentified ts. describing possible bookings and production details for The Cricket on the Hearth, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. The program provides a cast list for The Cricket on the Hearth. No cast list was found for The Mistress of the Inn.

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The cast for The Cricket on the Hearth was as follows: Deborah Pike, Inez Simons, Patricia Crusinberry, Mary Mildhack, Charles Wistar Yearsley, Charles Clement Brace, Robert Haig, Joseph Marcure, Lee Edwards, Mariane Bruner, Mary Jo Carveth, Marjorie Silvester, and Rex Johnson.

[20] Program for presentation of George Washington Slept Here by the Maria Ouspenskaya Studios of Dramatic Arts, 30 Jan. 1942, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA; Program for presentation of Dear Octopus by the Maria Ouspenskaya Studios of Dramatic Arts, c. March 1942; Invitation card for presentation of The Late Christopher Bean on 24 Nov. 1942, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. Programs provide cast lists. However, students who were already famous often used aliases.

The cast for George Washington Slept Here was as follows: Dick Fair, Robert Parish, Electra Gailas, Sylvia Sharon, Paul M. Smith, Blanche Crawford, Jane Dressler, Earl Wing, Irene Young, Margaret Douglas, David Hughes, William Bless, James Hamilton, Gloria Raffay, Carol Geiss, and Robert Baker.

The cast for Dear Octopus was as follows: Paul M. Smith, Jean Maclay, Joy Lindstrom, Lois Logan, Electra Gailas, Dick Fair, William Simpson, Janalle Norman, Bobbie Stebbins, Nancy June Robinson, Patricia Mauser, Bernice Yaffee, Alice Korstea, Samuel Ginzler, Dorothy Brown, Mary Herriot, and Patricia Peteler.

[21] Hedda Hopper, unidentified clipping, 8 April 1940, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA; Brochure for the 1940-1941 season.

[22] Maria Ouspenskaya, ts., "Guest Column for Hedda Hopper," 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[23] Nellie McCaslin, letter to author, 3 Nov. 1994. McCaslin writes that she attended the school during the summer of 1941, but brochures from the school don't mention a summer session until the summer of 1942. Either McCaslin was mistaken in her recollection of the date or the school added a special 1941 summer session.

Other female students who studied with Ouspenskaya during the 1940's before going on to pursue successful professional careers in the arts include Charlotte Perry and Elaine May. Notable Women in the American Theatre, eds. Alice M. Robinson, Vera Mowry Roberts, and Milly S. Baranger (New York; Westport, Connecticut; and London: 1989) 605 and 726.

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[24] Nellie McCaslin, letter to author, 3 Nov. 1994.

[25] Nellie McCaslin.

[26] Nellie McCaslin.

[27] Nellie McCaslin.

[28] Nellie McCaslin.

[29] Nellie McCaslin.

[30] Nellie McCaslin.

[31] Nellie McCaslin.

[32] Nellie McCaslin.

[33] Nellie McCaslin.

[34] Nellie McCaslin.

[35] Nellie McCaslin.

[36] Vern Haugland, unidentified clipping, August 1940, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center; Wallace, "It's Never Too Late to Act."

[37] Jerry Asher, "How Ugly Ducklings Can Find Happiness," Screenland April 1941: 56.

[38] Asher, "How Ugly Ducklings Can Find Happiness" 80.

[39] Dudley Early, "Hollywood By-the-Way," Family Circle 25 April 1940.

[40] Wallace, "It's Never Too Late to Act."

[41] Maria Ouspenskaya, ts., "Guest Column for Hedda Hopper," 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[42] New York Times 8 Jan 1940; Variety 13 Dec. 1939.

[43] The description of the plotline of Judge Hardy and Son is derived solely from reviews of the picture. With most other films, however, plot descriptions are derived from actual viewing of the movie on television or videotape. Only three pictures weren't available for viewing: Judge Hardy and Son, The Mystery of Marie Roget, and A Kiss in the Dark.

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[44] Screenplay of untitled Hardy story, 25 August 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[45] Irene Thirer, "Judge Hardy and Son at Criterion," unidentified clipping, c. Jan. 1940, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center; New York Times 8 Jan. 1940.

[46] New York Journal 18 Jan. 1940.

[47] Maria Ouspenskaya, "One Lone Foe of Typing," unidentified clipping, c. 1940, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[48] Ouspenskaya, "One Lone Foe of Typing."

[49] Ouspenskaya, "One Lone Foe of Typing."

[50] New York Times 24 Feb. 1940.

[51] Variety 7 Feb. 1940.

[52] John Russell Taylor, Hollywood 1940's (New York: Gallery Books, 1985) 13.

[53] New York Times 24 Feb. 1940.

[54] Variety 7 Feb. 1940.

[55] Changes to screenplay of Dr. Erlich's Magic Bullet, c. 1940, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[56] Academy Awards, 2nd ed., compiler Richard Shale (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing, 1982) 334.

[57] Variety Presents: The Complete Book of Major U.S. Show Business Awards (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1985) 13.

[58] Anthony Holden, Behind the Oscar (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993) 143.

[59] Taylor, Hollywood 1940's 6-7.

[60] Thomas Doherty, Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 5.

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[61] A special prologue at the beginning of the movie version of Waterloo Bridge shows the main character, Roy Cronin, as a WWII officer preparing to go to battle. The WWI story is his reminiscence, thus creating a tie between past and present.

[62] New York Times 17 May 1940; Variety 15 May 1940.

[63] New York Times 17 May 1940; Variety 15 May 1940.

[64] Variety 15 May 1940.

[65] "Ouspenskaya, 52, Toe-Dances Daily," unidentified clipping, c. 1940, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center; New York World Telegram 20 June 1940.

[66] Waterloo Bridge, dir. Mervyn Leroy, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1940.

[67] New York Times 21 June 1940; Variety 12 June 1940.

[68] "Star of Mortal Storm Works on Busy Schedule," New York World-Telegram 20 June 1940. At various times, Ouspenskaya also owned lovebirds, a monkey, and a dog.

[69] New York Times 3 August 1940; Variety 17 July 1940.

[70] Shooting schedule for And So Goodbye, 25 Nov. 1939 through 30 Dec. 1939, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[71] New York Times 27 Sept. 1940.

[72] Asher, "How Ugly Ducklings Can Find Happiness." Asher also mentions Ouspenskaya's dislike of cooking and driving, as well as her love of boats.

[73] Early, "Hollywood By-the-Way."

[74] John Franchey, "Meet the Madame," Modern Screen Nov. 1940.

[75] Shaffer, "Young in Spirit, If Not Years"

[76] Marsha McCreadie, The Women Who Write the Movies (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1994) 85.

[77] New York Times 11 Oct. 1940; Variety 28 Aug. 1940.

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[78] Variety 28 Aug. 1940.

[79] Screenplay for Dance, Girl, Dance, 12 April 1940, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[80] "Only America Holds Life Force for Art," Dallas News 25 June 1940.

[81] Philadelphia Inquirer 7 June 1940; Unidentified clipping about opening of Beyond Tomorrow, c. 1940, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[82] Shaffer, "Young in Spirit, If Not Years."

[83] Robert W. Dana, "From Forty Words in English to an Authority on Its Diction," unidentified clipping, 1939, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[84] Unidentified ts., 21 Nov. 1943, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. This is a short biographical sketch, probably written for publicity purposes.

[85] Wallace, "It's Never Too Late to Act."

[86] Wallace, "It's Never Too Late to Act."

[87] New York Times 22 Dec. 1941; Variety 17 Dec. 1941.

[88] Tony Thomas, The Best of Universal (New York: The Vestal Press, 1990) 68.

[89] David J. Skall, The Monster Show (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992) 211.

[90] Skall 214.

[91] New York Motion Picture Herald 13 Dec. 1941.

[92] Variety 17 Dec. 1941; New York Times 22 Dec. 1941.

[93] The Wolf Man, dir. George Waggner, Universal, 1941.

[94] Variety 24 Dec. 1941; New York Times 26 Dec. 1941.

[95] Thomas Brady, "Keeping the 'Gesture' Inoffensive," New York Times 28 Sept. 1941.

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[96] Taylor, Hollywood 1940's 48-53.

[97] New York Times 26 Dec. 1941; Variety 24 Dec. 1941.

[98] Variety 24 Dec. 1941; New York Times 3 Feb. 1942.

[99] Douglas W. Churchhill, "Hollywood Notations," New York Times 28 Sept. 1941.

[100] New York Times 3 Feb. 1942; Cleveland Plain Dealer 17 April 1942.

[101] Variety 24 Dec. 1941.

[102] New York Herald Tribune 3 Feb. 1942; Wall Street Journal 5 Feb. 1942.

[103] "Ouspenskaya Spurned $10,000 for Book on Acting," unidentified clipping, c. 1942, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. Although Ouspenskaya never published any extended explanation of her teaching philosophy during her lifetime, a collection of what are purported to be notes on acting by Maria Ouspenskaya appear posthumously in three 1954 issues of American Repertory Theater magazine. Written in first-person by Ouspenskaya, the notes explain such acting concerns as maintaining a separation between life and acting, using sense memory to recall a mood, staying in the moment with a character, and listening. Parts I and II are printed in the October 1954 issue, while Part III appears in the November 1954 issue, and Part IV and V are included in the December 1954 issue.

[104] Variety 8 April 1942: New York Times 4 May 1942.

[105] Variety 8 April 1942; Hollywood Reporter 3 April 1942.

[106] New York Journal American 5 May 1942.

[107] New York Herald 5 May 1942.

[108] Membership card for the Hollywood Canteen, 1942, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.; Shaffer, "Young in Spirit, If Not Years."

[109] Variety 24 Feb. 1943; New York Times 6 March 1943.

[110] Skall, "The Monster Show" 216-217.

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[111] Skall, "The Monster Show" 216-217.

[112] Shooting schedule for Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman, 26 Oct. 1942 through 5 Nov. 1942, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

[113] Philadelphia Inquirer 5 March 1943.

[114] Unidentified ts., 21 Nov. 1943, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA. This short biographical sketch mentions that Ouspenskaya planned to reopen her school when conditions allowed.

[115] The Encyclopedia of the American Theatre, 1900-1975, ed. Edwin Bronner (San Diego and New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1980) 359.

[116] New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1943 Index (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1943) vol. IV, no. 19: 237-239. This contains reviews of Outrageous Fortune from eight New York newspapers.

[117] New York Herald Tribune 4 Nov. 1943.

[118] New York Times 4 Nov. 1943; New York Journal-American 4 Nov. 1943.

[119] New York Post 4 Nov. 1943; New York World-Telegram 4 Nov. 1943.

[120] "Actress Defies Doctor Despite Serious Illness," unidentified clipping, Jan. 1944, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[121] Frank Doyle, "Madame Carries On Role to End Despite High Fever," unidentified clipping, Jan. 1944, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[122] "Play's Show Lead with Pneumonia," Boston Post 10 Jan. 1944.

[123] Newsletter for Zeta Phi Eta, c. Jan. 1944, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[124] Newsletter for Zeta Phi Eta, c. Jan. 1944, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New

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York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[125] "Play's Show Lead with Pneumonia," Boston Post 10 Jan. 1944.

[126] Lucius Beebe, "Stage Asides: Ouspenskaya," unidentified clipping, c. 1943, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center.

[127] Shaffer, "Young in Spirit, If Not Years."

[128] Variety 21 March 1945; New York Times 30 April 1945.

[129] New York Times 30 April 1945.

[130] New York Times 7 September 1946; Variety 4 Sept. 1946.

[131] Shaffer, "Young in Spirit, If Not Years."

[132] Variety 30 July 1947.

[133] New York Times 25 July 1947.

[134] New York Times 26 March 1949; Variety 2 March 1949.

[135] Variety 2 March 1949.

[136] Lawrence J. Quirk, Jane Wyman, the Actress and the Woman (New York: Dembner Books, 1986) 123.

[137] Details of Ouspenskaya's accident and subsequent death are contained within the following sources: "Actress Seriously Burned in Home," Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express 1 Dec. 1949; "Maria Ouspenskaya Is Burned," New York Times 2 Dec. 1949; "Russ Actress Burned While Smoking in Bed," Los Angeles Times 2 Dec. 1949; "Hollywood Actress Succumbs to Burns," Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express 3 Dec. 1949; "Maria Ouspenskaya Began Career with Stanislavsky," New York Herald Tribune 4 Dec. 1949; and "Russ Actress Dies of Burns," Los Angeles Times 4 Dec. 1949.

[138] Details of Ouspenskaya's funeral service are contained within the following sources: "Maria Ouspenskaya Funeral," unidentified clipping, Dec. 1949, Ouspenskaya clipping file, Billy Rose Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center; "Ouspenskaya Final Rites Set Tomorrow," Los Angeles Times

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5 Dec. 1949; "Set Rites for Maria Ouspenskaya," Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express 5 Dec. 1949; and New York Times 7 Dec. 1949. A rumor that Ouspenskaya died in such extreme poverty that former students were forced to pay for her funeral remains unconfirmed.

[139] The following sources contain an obituary for Ouspenskaya: New York Times 4 Dec. 1949; Newsweek 12 Dec. 1949; Time 12 Dec. 1949; and Daniel Blum's Screen World (New York: Bilbo and Tannen, 1949) vol. 1: 234.

[140] Paramahansa Yogananda, Autobiography of a Yogi (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1946).

[141] Maria Ouspenskaya, ts. "My Reminiscences and Observations," c. 1945, Maria Ouspenskaya Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA, 3.

[142] New York Times 7 Dec. 1949.

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CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

Ouspenskaya managed to live what seemed to be a full and satisfying life. She overcame personal troubles from her past, including the death of her father while she was still a child and the loss of family and friends during the Russian revolution, to establish a successful professional career as an actress and a teacher. Filled with tragedy and triumph, Ouspenskaya's life story reads like a possible plot for one of her movies.

Fortunately for American theatre, Ouspenskaya's life was more than an entertaining series of movie-worthy events. During her twenty-seven years in the United States, Ouspenskaya made numerous significant contributions to her craft as an actress and a teacher.

Probably the most obvious contribution is her teaching of Stanislavsky's "System" to hundreds of students during the course of her American career. At the American Laboratory Theatre alone, Ouspenskaya may have taught as many as five hundred students, and she added to that number with her teaching at the Neighborhood Playhouse and her summer schools.[1] In her schools in Hollywood and New York, she taught at least forty to sixty students per year, in addition to an unknown number of private students. Some of those students may have stayed just a few months, but all received some degree of knowledge of the new acting process. Many carried that knowledge

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to professional careers in film and theatre, as well as radio, television, and education. Several, like Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler, impacted American theatre beyond measure.

The link between Ouspenskaya's teaching and the Group Theatre cannot be stressed too much. When Strasberg, Adler, and Harold Clurman took their knowledge of the System to the Group Theatre in the 1930's, they changed the course of acting in the United States for the rest of the century. On Broadway and in films, Group members proved the effectiveness of System-inspired acting to the American public and other theatre artists as well. Strasberg's later work at the Actor's Studio, although controversial, influenced the careers of some of this century's most famous actors and sparked a debate about acting technique that lasted several decades.

Of course, many lesser known artists also carried the legacy of Ouspenskaya's teaching to theatre-related careers in the United States. Colleges and universities, in particular, felt the effect of Ouspenskaya's former students. As some of those students began their own teaching careers, curriculums began to incorporate classes using System acting techniques. As early as the end of the 1920's, schools began to display the influence of the System, and it remains one of the most widely taught methods of actor training used in institutions of higher education today.[2]

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Although little doubt exists about Ouspenskaya's influence, her skills as a teacher seem to have evolved over the years. The early dissatisfaction displayed by some of her students at the Lab is nowhere in evidence by the time she moved to Hollywood in 1939. Whether Ouspenskaya changed her methods or her students simply learned to accept her pedagogical style remains unknown. By the 1940's, though, she was certainly highly respected as an acting teacher.

Ouspenskaya's teaching is an undeniable contribution to American theatre, but another is her acting. Ouspenskaya's many Broadway and film appearances gave audiences of her day a sense of the potential quality of System-inspired acting. Her movie roles also provide audiences and scholars of today with a lasting visual legacy of a former student of Stanislavsky in action. Few other actors with direct links to the Russian master ever recorded their work on film in America.

Ouspenskaya's willingness to experiment with film and other mediums, such as radio and television, suggests yet another contribution to theatre in the United States, the idea that stage actors could move freely from one medium to the another with the proper training and attitude. Through her own work, Ouspenskaya showed that System techniques could be applied effectively to either stage or screen. By playing a wide range of character parts in works ranging from serious stage dramas to horror

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films, she also demonstrated that no role is too small or too strange as long as it offers a challenge to one's skills, whatever the medium.

Ouspenskaya was regularly typecast during her American career. She often expressed her desire to try all sorts of roles, but she most often appeared as a wise and maternal woman of advanced years, be it a countess or a grandmother or a servant. Perhaps her best roles, though, are those in which she broke the mold, such as Maleva, the gypsy woman in The Wolf Man, who she played with uncommon abandon. No matter what the part, Ouspenskaya prepared carefully. However, her early film roles reveal that she sometimes spoke in a deliberate manner at odds with the overall pace of the film, delivering her lines too slowly and articulating her words too precisely. In her later films, she appears more natural, probably because she had become more familiar with both the medium and the English language.

In her day, Ouspenskaya provided an important link between the stage and films. By agreeing to act in movies during the 1930's and the 1940's, she lent artistic prestige and credibility to the fledgling art form of the talkies, which began with The Jazz Singer in 1927, America's first movie with sound. Her teaching helped Hollywood actors to cope with the specialized demands of talking films, most particularly in the areas of diction and movement. Along with other theatre artists of the

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time, she showed the filmmakers of Hollywood that they could still gain much from the theatre.

Apart from her more obvious contributions to American theatre, Ouspenskaya also left a more subtle legacy, her success in an industry often geared toward youth and beauty. Through both words and actions, Ouspenskaya demonstrated that performers could assume control of their careers to achieve goals that might normally be denied them because of looks or age or gender. Ouspenskaya, in fact, was already in her mid-thirties when she arrived in America, and she was far from glamorous, but she still won numerous acting roles in plays and in films, and she regularly garnered critical acclaim. In addition, she made successes of her acting schools in New York and Hollywood without the benefit of outside sponsorship, and she negotiated the movie business in Hollywood without a studio contract when studios controlled most of the work. Biographer Carolyn Heilbrun defines power in the following way: "Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter."[3] Ouspenskaya provides a model for wielding power.

Some questions remain about Ouspenskaya's career. What were her roles with the MAT? How much work did she do in radio and television? Did she open her school again after World War II? Was the slowdown in her career after 1943 due to changing public taste in films and theatre

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or some sort of illness? Ouspenskaya's private life, which was beyond the scope of this study, also holds its mysteries. Who were her personal friends and lovers? Did she have a drinking problem? Was she happy with her life choices? Until more information can be obtained, possibly from former friends and colleagues, all questions must be left unanswered.

Nevertheless, Ouspenskaya's many contributions to American theatre history are known and have been overlooked by scholars for too long. It is time to acknowledge that Ouspenskaya might be counted as one of the most influential figures of twentieth-century theatre in the United States. In any case, she deserves to be recognized as more than a footnote to mentions of Boleslavsky and the Lab. With her unique talents and achievements, along with her vibrant personality, Ouspenskaya rates a special place among the great names of theatre, in America and beyond. During the actress's lifetime, one Hollywood reporter offered the following rapturous praise:

> Her presence carries a thrill, for the veriest dullard must recognize a superbly scintillant, dynamic personality, an artist of excellence seldom encountered. Duse must have been like this, and Rachel and Bernhardt. Ouspenskaya shares the stature of the mighty.4

To Ouspenskaya, such praise probably seemed excessive. A more appropriate tribute to the actress should acknowledge her hard work and indomitable spirit.

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Although Ouspenskaya's last years are still shrouded in mystery, it seems apparent from the opinions of her co-workers on her last film, 1949's A Kiss in the Dark, that she still retained energy and hope. She once told a Hollywood reporter that she had little patience for people who floundered about without direction and wallowed in self-pity. The best course of action, she claimed, was to "aim yourself for life."[5] Even until her tragic end, Ouspenskaya apparently followed her own advice. American theatre still reaps the benefits.

NOTES--CHAPTER 8

[1] J. W. Roberts, Richard Boleslavsky: His Life and Work in the Theatre (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981) 229.

[2] Kenneth MacGowan, Footlights Across America (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1929) 132-153.

[3] Carolyn Heilbrun, Writing a Woman's Life (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988) 18.

[4] Regina Crewe, "Ouspenskaya Art Stands Out in Film," New York Journal-American 29 Oct. 1937.

[5] Jerry Asher, "How Ugly Ducklings Can Find Happiness," Screenland April 1941: 56.

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APPENDIX

ROLES PERFORMED ON THE MAT TOURS (1923-1924) INCLUDE:

Role	Play (playwright)
Avdotya Nazarovna	Ivanov (Anton Chekhov)
Marina	Uncle Vanya (Anton Chekhov)
Charlotta	The Cherry Orchard (Anton Chekhov)
Anna	The Lower Depths (Maxim Gorky)
Peasant	Tsar Fyodor (Count Alexei Tolstoy)
Singer	The Three Sisters (Anton Chekhov)
First Hanger-on	Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man (Alexander Ostrovsky)
Lentochka	The Death of Pazukhin (Mikhail Saltikov-Shchedrin)

ROLES PERFORMED ON THE NEW YORK STAGE:

Role	Play (Playwright) Year Produced
Paris Pigeons	The Saint (Stark Young) 1924
Fiametta	The Jest (Sem Benelli) 1926
Herlofs-Marte	The Witch (John Masefield) 1926
Curtis	The Taming of the Shrew (William Shakespeare) 1927
Anfisa	The Three Sisters (Anton Chekhov) 1930
Fraulein	The Passing Present (Gretchen Damrosch) 1931
Baroness von Obersdorf	Dodsworth (Sidney Howard) 1934
Emma	Abide With Me (Clare Boothe Brokaw) 1935
Polymnia	Daughters of Atreus (Robert Turney) 1936
Mrs. Harris	Outrageous Fortune (Rose Franken) 1943

MOVIE ROLES:

Role	Film (Director) Opening Year
Baroness von Obersdorf	Dodsworth (William Wyler) 1936
Countess Pelagia	Conquest (Clarence Brown) 1937
Mme. Marnay	Love Affair (Leo McCarey) 1939
Maharini	The Rains Came (Clarence Brown) 1939
Mrs. Valduzzi	Judge Hardy and Son (George Seitz) 1939/1940
Franziska Speyer	Dr. Erlich's Magic Bullet (William Dieterle) 1940

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MORE MOVIE ROLES:

Role	Film (Director) Opening Year
Mme. Olga Kirowa.....	Waterloo Bridge (Mervyn LeRoy) 1940
Mrs. Breitner.....	The Mortal Storm (Frank Borzage) 1940
Frau Gerhardt.....	The Man I Married (Irving Pichel) 1940
Mme. Basilova.....	Dance, Girl, Dance (Dorothy Arzner) 1940
Mme. Tanya.....	Beyond Tomorrow (A. Edward Sutherland) 1940
Maleva.....	The Wolf Man (George Waggner) 1941
Amah.....	The Shanghai Gesture (Josef von Sternberg) 1941
Mme. von Eln.....	Kings Row (Sam Wood) 1942
Mme. Roget.....	The Mystery of Marie Roget (Phil Rosen) 1942
Maleva.....	Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man (Roy William Neill) 1942
Amazon Queen.....	Tarzan and the Amazons (Kurt Neumann) 1945
Mme. Goronoff.....	I've Always Loved You (Frank Borzage) 1946
Maria.....	Wyoming (Joseph Kane) 1947
Mme. Karina.....	A Kiss in the Dark (Delmer Daves) 1949

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VITA

Pamela Sue Heilman is from Havre, Montana. After graduating from Rocky Mountain College in 1980 with a bachelor of arts degree in English, she taught junior high English in Wolf Point, Montana, and speech and composition at Northern Montana College. She earned her master of arts degree in Theatre from The Ohio State University in 1989.

Ms. Heilman is a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and she will graduate from Louisiana State University in May of 1999. She currently lives in Baton Rouge, where she has taught high school English and acting classes for both Playmakers of Baton Rouge and the Baton Rouge Little Theatre. An avid fan of mystery novels, she hopes to publish her own fiction in the future.

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DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Pamela Sue Heilman

Major Field: Theatre

Title of Dissertation: The American Career of Maria Ouspenskaya (1887-1949): Actress and Teacher

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Date of Examination:

November 17, 1998

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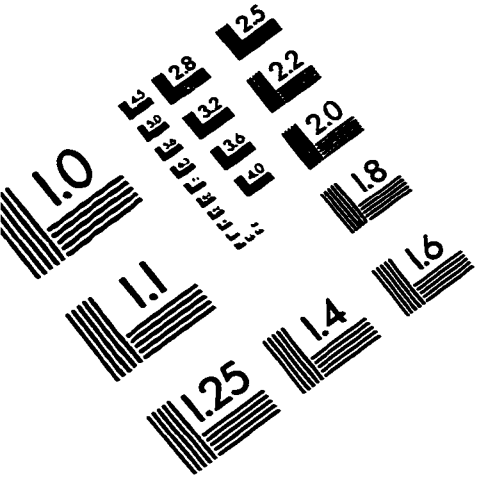
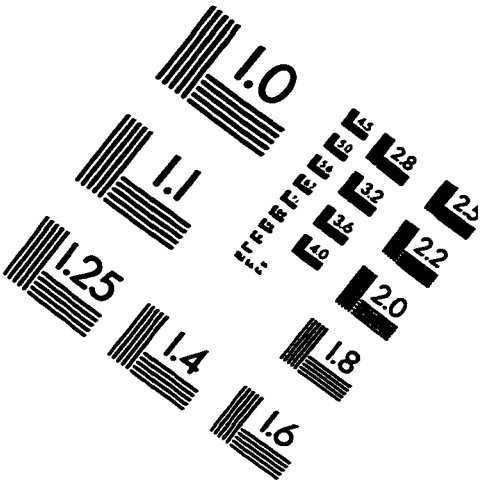
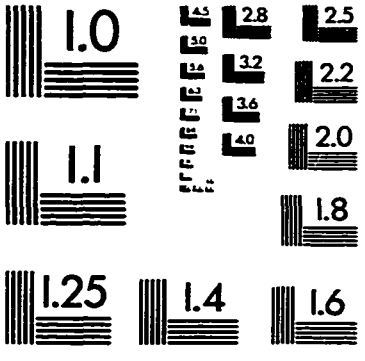
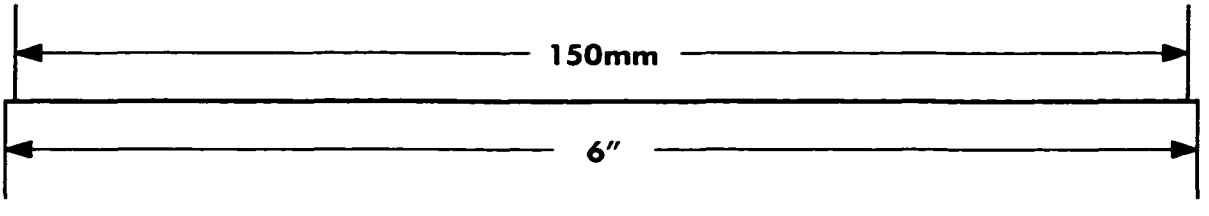
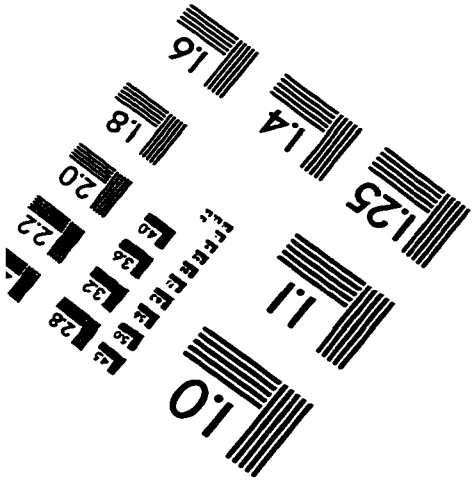
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

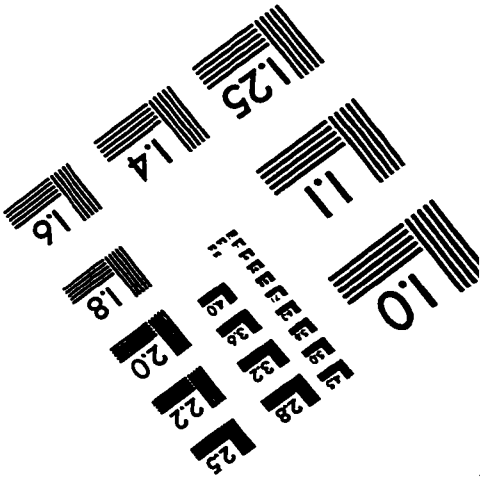












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